

THE GILGIT AGENCY

1877—1935

By
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M.A., Ph.D.

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ABBREVIATIONS USED FOR REFERENCES

AAR	Annual Administration Report (General) of the Jammu and Kashmir State.
Alder, G.J.	Alder, G.J., <i>British India's Northern Frontier</i> , 1963.
Archibald	Colquhoun R. Archibald, <i>Russia Against India</i> , 1900.
Burnaby, Fred	Burnaby, Fred, <i>A Ride to Khiva : Travels and Adventures in Central Asia</i> , 1878.
Col R.C.F., Schomberg Col.	Schomberg, Col R.C.F., <i>Between the Oxus and the Indus</i> , 1935. Colonel.
Col Algernon Durand	Durand, Col Algernon, <i>Making of a Frontier</i> , 1899.
Confdl	Confidential.
C-in-C.	Commander-in-Chief.
Drew, Frederic	Drew, Frederic, <i>The Northern Barrier of India</i> , 1971.
Extl	External.
Front.	Frontier.
Fgn,	Foreign Department.
Gulabnama	<i>Gulabnama of Diwan Kirpa Ram</i> , 1876, (Tr. by Sukhdev Singh Charak in 1977.)
Govt. of India	Government of India
Go-Ge.	Governor-General.
GOI.	Records of the Government of India in the National Archives of India, New Delhi.
Genl.	General.
Hashmetullah Khan	Khan, Hashmetullah, <i>Tarikh Jammu</i> , 1939.
Intl	Internal.

Imperial Gazetteer	<i>Imperial Gazetteer of India, Provincial Series</i> Kashmir and Jammu, 1909.
J and K	Jammu and Kashmir.
JK	Records of the Jammu and Kashmir State in the State Archives Repositories at Jammu and Srinagar.
Knight, E.F.	Knight, E.F., <i>Where Three Empires Meet</i> , 1983.
Kak, R.C.	Kak, R.C., A Note on the nature of the relationship between the Jammu and Kashmir State and the Chiefships and Territories comprised in the Gilgit Political Agency, 1939.
Lt.	Lieutenant.
Lt. W.G.L. Beynon	Beynon, Lieutenant, W.G.L., <i>With Kelly to Chitral</i> , 1896.
Major John Biddulph	Biddulph, Major John, <i>Tribes of the Hindukush</i> , 1880.
Memo	Memorandum.
NAI	National Archives of India, New Delhi.
Offg	Officiating.
PAG	Political Agent, Gilgit.
Pol	Political.
Prasad, Bisheshwar	Prasad, Bisheshwar, <i>The Foundation of India's Foreign Policy 1860-1882</i> , 1967.
RK	Resident in Kashmir.
Swinson Arthur	Swinson, Arthur, <i>North-West Frontier</i> , 1967.
SSI	Secretary of State for India.
SGI	Secretary to the Government of India.
Secy	Secretary.
Sec	Secret.
Stumm, Hugo	Stumm, Hugo, <i>The Russian Campaign Against Khiva in 1873, 1876</i> .

- Sir George Robertson Robertson, Sir George, *Chitral. The Story of a Minor Siege*, 1898.
- Thomson, H.C. Thomson, H.C., *The Chitral Campaign*, 1895.
- Younghusband and Younghusband, Captain C.J. and
Younghusband Younghusband Captain Frank E,
The Relief of Chitral, 1895.

PREFACE

This work is based on my Ph.D. thesis submitted to the University of Jammu.

The establishment of the Gilgit Agency was one of the different means that the British Government of India adopted for the protection of their northern and north-western frontier. The subject, the 'Gilgit Agency', therefore is one of abiding interest.

The difficulties that the author faced in collecting material for this study, however, were manifold. One of the serious difficulties that he found himself confronted with was to find the State records closed to scrutiny at 1925 A.D. A similar difficulty had to be faced in the National Archives of India, where the records even after the year 1913 were inaccessible for consultation. Books on this period were found to be helpful only to a very limited extent. The Ministry of External Affairs of the Government of India, however, kindly gave a special permission to consult the relevant records upto the year 1935. The study, therefore, is based entirely on contemporary sources, which include published and unpublished records of the Government of India and of the State, private papers of the Governor Generals and Viceroys of India of the time, annual administration reports of the State, newspapers and other printed works, both primary and secondary.

Another difficulty that the author had to face in the completion of this thesis was that the whole account that he found in the records pertaining to events in the area in question was given from only the British point of view, and the tribal view of the situation was not easy to find. This difficulty was surmounted with the help of the contemporary journals and newspapers.

The subject-matter as detailed in the book has been divided into 11 Chapters. It begins with an account of the geography and early history of the Gilgit frontier. This is followed by an

examination of the circumstances which necessitated the establishment of the British Agency at Gilgit in 1877. The Agency had to be recalled in 1881 as it was supposed to have failed in delivering the required goods. The mistake in recalling the Agency was, however, soon realised and the Agency was re-established in 1889. How all this happened is discussed in Chapters III and IV. The re-establishment of the Agency brought the British into a real and close touch with the tribal people for the first time. This together with some other causes including the absence of the law of primogeniture resulted in reactions and counter-reactions that adopted the shape of different tribal uprisings and their suppression, which are detailed in the four chapters that follow. In the 9th Chapter are enumerated the different steps taken for the defence and management of the Agency, while in the 10th a reference is made to the different territorial units of the Agency, and a part of their history pertaining to our period that could not be told in the preceding chapters. At the end is placed the epilogue, which after summarising the findings of the author stated earlier, tries to give a few words of justification for the whole exercise the British undertook in the establishment and management of the Agency.

It may not be out of place for the author to express his hearty thanks to the staff of the National Archives of India, New Delhi; National Library, Calcutta; Research and Publication Library, Srinagar; Sri Ranbir Library, Jammu; M.A.M. College Library, Jammu; Central Library of the Jammu University; Bhadarwah College Library; Archives Repositories of the Jammu and Kashmir State at Jammu and Srinagar, without whose help and co-operation he would not have been able to collect the necessary material. He owes a great debt of gratitude to all the scholars who have written on the Himalayan areas, and from whose writings he has benefited. He is grateful to his critics and admirers alike. While the former have strengthened his determination, the latter have encouraged him. But for the scholarship from the University of Jammu, Fellowship from the I.C.H.R. and the Contingent Grant from the I.C.S.S.R., the work would not have been completed. The author is also thankful to some private individuals who freely

lent him money to enable him to prosecute his research work. His thanks are due to Dr. N.K. Zutshi, Reader in History, Jammu University, for his invaluable advice and unstinted co-operation.

Lastly, the author acknowledges his deep sense of obligation towards his supervisor, Dr. G.S. Chhabra, for his guidance with selfless and indefatigable dedication throughout the period of his research.

AMAR SINGH CHOHAN

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
Abbreviations	iii
Preface	vii
1. Geography and History of Gilgit	1
2. Establishment of the Gilgit Agency	22
3. Major Biddulph as British Agent and His Recall in 1881	51
4. Reappointment of the Agent, 1889	75
5. The Hunza and Nagar War	96
6. The Indus Valley Rising	118
7. The Chitral Imbrolio of 1895	132
8. The Chitral Imbrolio of 1895 (Contd.) The Two-pronged Attack	157
9. The Defence and Management of the Gilgit Agency	179
10. Territorial Units of the Gilgit Agency. The Untold Part of their History and Lease of the Agency	203
11. Epilogue	222
Bibliography	225

Geography and History of Gilgit

In the year 1845 there occurred an important episode in the history of British India. The first Anglo-Sikh War broke out. This was one of the most hotly contested campaigns that the English ever fought in India, and victory at one time trembled in the balance. The battle of Sobraon, however, decided the fate of the contest in favour of the British.¹ The Sikhs were defeated, and peace was concluded between the two powers by the Treaty of Lahore, dated March 9, 1846.² But the English detested the warlike habits of the Sikhs and wanted to cripple their power once and for all. To this end, they dismembered the Sikh Kingdom of the Punjab. Out of it they created a separate State of Jammu and Kashmir and sold it to a Dogra Rajput of Jammu, Gulab Singh, under the Treaty of Amritsar, dated March 16, 1846, for seventy-five lakhs of rupees.³ Gulab Singh thus became the first ruler of Jammu and Kashmir. Not only the vale of Kashmir, but all the hill countries beyond which had been recently subjugated by the Sikhs, including Ladakh, Baltistan, and Astore and Gilgit districts, by this Treaty became the appanage of the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir.⁴

1. Bose, Jogendra Chandra, *Kashmir and its Prince*, 1889 p. 3.
2. *A Handbook of the Jammu and Kashmir State*, 1947, p. 20.
3. Kirpa Ram, Diwan, *Gulabnama*, 1876, (Tr. by Sukhdev Singh Charak in 1977), hereafter quoted as *Gulabnama*, pp. 296-309 ; Panikkar, K.M, *The Foundation of the Kashmir State*, 1930, pp. 90-100 ; Cunningham, Joseph Davy, *A History of the Sikhs*, 1966 (reprint), pp. 286-288.
4. *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Provincial Series Kashmir and Jammu, hereafter quoted as *Imperial Gazetteer*, 1909, p. 28; Report by RK on his tour in the GA, GOI, Fgn and Pol, No. 206 of 1935.

In exchange for the independent sovereignty over this extensive region, Gulab Singh, besides promising to pay seventy-five lakhs of rupees to the British, engaged himself to come to their assistance with the whole of his army whenever they were at war with any people near his frontier. He also acknowledged British supremacy, and agreed to pay a nominal annual tribute—consisting chiefly of Kashmir shawls—to the British government.⁵

Geography of Gilgit

To the north-west of Kashmir State, running upto and on the right of the Indus, was the Gilgit valley.⁶ It was a part and parcel of Dardistan. There was, actually, no region known as Dardistan to its inhabitants. Dardistan appears to be simply a convenient, but somewhat misleading, name employed by the British Geographers to express a large tract inhabited by different Aryan races of somewhat similar type.⁷ It comprised, besides Gilgit, Astore, Boonji, Hunza, Nagar, Punial, Yasin, the independent republics of the Indus valley such as Gor, Darel and Tangir, and other countries south of the Hindukush⁸ including Chitral.^{9*}

The ancient name of Gilgit under its Hindu Ras (Kings) was Sargin. Later it was known as Gilyit, which the Sikhs and

5. *Gulabnama*, pp. 421-422.

6. Col R.C.F. Schomberg, *Between the Oxus and the Indus*, hereafter quoted as Col R.C.F. Schomberg, 1935, p. 15 (Col Schomberg had visited the Gilgit Agency several times before the publication of his above-named book in 1935).

7. Major John Biddulph, *Tribes of the Hindukush*, hereafter quoted as Major John Biddulph, 1880, pp. 8-9 (Biddulph served as the first British Agent in Gilgit); Knight, E.F, *Where Three Empires Meet*, hereafter quoted as Knight, E.F, 1893, p. 258 (Knight was one of the officers who commanded the Gilgit troops in the Hunza-Nagar War of 1891-92).

8. *Imperial Gazetteer*, p. 106; Knight, E.F, p. 258.

9. Collier Davies, *Problem of the North-West Frontier 1890-1908*, 1932 p. 57.

*. A short history of all these territories only so far as they were involved in the politics and history of Gilgit, which is our main concern, follows. The remaining part of the history of these areas which is not given in this or the following chapters will be placed in Chapter No. X, so far as it is found relevant.

Dogras corrupted into Gilgit.¹⁰ Gilgit was situated at an elevation of 4,890 feet above sea level in 35°55' N and 74°23' East.¹¹ The climate of Gilgit was dry and wholesome, though the heat in summer, owing to the radiation from the enormous expanse of bare rock, was oppressive ; but the nights were cool and fresh. There was no rainfall to speak of, it being almost intercepted by the neighbouring lofty mountains.¹² There was also practically no snowfall in Gilgit.¹³ The vegetable products of Gilgit consisted of wheat, barley, naked barley, rice,* maize, millet, buck wheat, pulse**, rape and cotton. The fruits included mulberry, peach, apricot, grape, apple, quince, pear, greengage, fig, walnut, pomegranate and sarshing; besides musk-melons and water-melons. Silk was grown, but in very small quantity.¹⁴

From the strategical point of view, Gilgit was of as much importance to the British government of India as Peshawar, for it was the gate to India from Central Asia and it was here that the three Empires of China, Russia and Great Britain met.¹⁵ Besides, it covered all the Passes over the Hindukush from the eastern most one, the Shimshal, to those at the head of the Yasin River, in the west. All these Passes descended to the valleys of the Gilgit River and its tributaries. But the possession of the Gilgit valley would offer more than this ; it afforded the British a direct communication through Kashmir territory to the protected State of Chitral, which would be otherwise removed from their influence by the interposition of countries at that time closed to them.¹⁶ Again, from Gilgit

10. *Imperial Gazetteer*, p. 106.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 105.

12. Major John Biddulph, p. 4.

13. Drew, Frederic, *The Northern Barrier of India*, hereafter quoted as Drew, Frederic, 1971, p. 409; (Drew was in the service of the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir from 1862 to 1872 and travelled extensively in Dardistan during this period).

* Rice grew in the Gilgit village only.

** Called mungi, manh and massar in the local dialect.

14. Drew, Frederic, p. 409, Major John Biddulph, p. 4,

15. GOI, Fgn and Pol, No. 114-X(Sec) of 1935, Nos. 1-35, Jalali : J.L.K., *Handbook for Visitors to Kashmir*, p. 62.

16. Knight, E.F., p. 270.

mountain roads radiated into all the surrounding valleys.¹⁷ It is easy, therefore, to see how favourable was its position for the establishment of the headquarters of a confederacy of small States.

History of Gilgit

The history of Gilgit, 'Sargin Gilgit' or the happy land of Gilgit, as it was known in its own Shina language, is lost in antiquity. The last ruler reputed to have been a Hindu was Sri Badat, whose rule extended over all the neighbourhood from Astore to Chitral; he was a real person, but has become legendary on account of his reputed cannibalism.¹⁸ Hunza tradition has it that the daughter of the cannibal King married a Hunza prince, Shamsheer, and it was this daughter who arranged her father's death. Only fire could harm the Ra. They dug a deep trench near his castle gate, concealing it with a cloth. They then raised an alarm at night, the Ra rushed out to repulse what he believed was an attack, fell into the trench, and was killed by the villagers throwing burning torches on him.¹⁹

But there is another version of Badat's death. According to it, the said Hunza prince launched an attack on Gilgit. Badat faced the enemy desperately, but was killed in the battlefield by an arrow from Shamsheer. The death of Badat decided the fate of the battle in favour of Shamsheer who occupied Gilgit.²⁰ Shamsheer was a Muhammedan and established Muslim rule in Gilgit.²¹

17. Major John Biddulph, p. 21; Khan, Hashmetullah, '*Tarikh Jammu*', 1939, p. 766, (Hashmetullah Khan was in the employment of the British and the Maharaja. He served in Gilgit and Chitral from 1894-1903).

18. It is narrated that on one occasion he went to a woman's house, and when he demanded food she gave him the 'meat' of a kid that she had reared on her own milk. The flavour was so excellent that the Ra asked how it was that the meat was so delicate, and when he learned the cause he never afterwards ate anything except the flesh of young children.

(Col R.C.F. Schomberg, p. 249).

19. Col R.C.F. Schomberg, p. 249.

20. Khan, Hashmetullah, '*Tarikh Jammu*', hereafter quoted as Hashmetullah Khan, 1939, p. 768.

21. Major John Biddulph, p. 20.

Whatever be the circumstances of Sri Badat's death, all available sources on the subject agree that he was removed from the scene, the Hindu rule in Gilgit was terminated, and a Muslim one founded by Shamsheer.*

The dynasty that was founded by Shamsheer was called Trakhane, from a celebrated Ra named Trakhan, who reigned about the commencement of the fourteenth century. The previous rulers, of whom Sri Badat was the last, were called Shahreis.²²

Tarakhan was succeeded as Ra of Gilgit by Azar, Jamsher, Khisrau, Fardos, Habikan, Gauritham, Muhammad Khan and Abas.²³

Abas was the last of the Trakane line; with him ended the independence of Gilgit; henceforward the valley was devastated by successive invasions of the neighbouring Rajas, who, each in turn, first acquired the country and then was defeated and killed by some other. In the twenty or thirty years ending with 1842 there were five dynastic revolutions in Gilgit, as follows :—²⁴

(1) Suleiman Shah, ruler of Yasin, of the Bakhte caste or family, who was a refugee in Gilgit and had been given protection by its ruler, killed Abas about 1805.²⁵

(2) Azad Khan, ruler of Punial, killed Suleiman Shah at Cher Kila and ruled in his stead in Gilgit.

(3) Tair Shah, ruler of Nagar, displaced and killed Azad Khan; he himself died a natural death, and was succeeded by his son, Shah Sikandar.

(4) Gaur Rahman, ruler of Yasin, conquered Gilgit and killed Shah Sikandar.²⁶

(5) Shah Sikandar's brother, Karim Khan, having escaped to Gor, from there sent an agent to the Sikh Governor of Kashmir imploring aid against the invader. The appeal was

* The exact date of this event is not known.

22. Major John Biddulph, p. 20.

23. Drew, Frederic, p. 435.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 436.

25. GOI, Fgn., Sec., July 1877, Nos. 34-60 B; Memo on Rulers in Gilgit, GOI, Fgn, Sec., April 1874, Nos. 38-43; Drew, Frederic, p. 436; Col. R.C.F., Schomberg, p. 251.

26. Drew, Frederic, p. 436.

responded to.²⁷ A couple of Sikh Regiments were sent under Nathu Shah, a Sayyid of Gujranwala, who was a capable commander²⁸ and held the rank of a Colonel. This was about the year 1842. Up to this time the Sikhs had not occupied the intermediate country of Astore, but they had made it tributary to them; now on advancing they established a post there to make there communications sure.

Nathu Shah encountered Gaur Rahman (who seems to have relinquished Gilgit itself) at Basin, three miles higher up the valley, and defeated him; Gaur Rahman retired into Punial.

Shortly afterwards, in the same year, one Mathra Das, having boasted to the Sikh Governor of Kashmir that he could easily settle the whole country of Gilgit, was sent to supersede Nathu Shah. Coming to Gilgit, Mathra Das went forward to the frontier by Sharot with part of the Sikh force, Nathu Shah retaining the rest. Gaur Rahman attacked Mathra Das and his force in the stony plain between Sharot and Gulpur and defeated them with great loss.²⁹ Mathra Das himself ran straight to Kashmir; but Nathu, who was really a soldier, came up with his reserve and prepared to engage Gaur Rahman. But before they came to blows negotiations were entered into, and the strange result was that it was agreed that the Sikhs should hold Gilgit, the boundary being drawn where the two forces were confronting each other, that being, indeed, the usual boundary of Gilgit, and that Gaur Rahman should give his daughter in marriage to Nathu Shah. Not only was this done, but the Hunza Raja, and the Nagar Raja, Jaffer Khan, who were there as allies to Gaur Rahman, did the same thing; each giving a daughter to Nathu Shah, and peace was made all around.³⁰

Of course, Nathu Shah did not give over Gilgit completely to Raja Karim Khan, who had beseeched the Sikh aid, but there was a kind of joint government established. Krim Khan

27. Memo on Rulers in Gilgit, GOI, Fgn, Sec, April 1874, Nos. 38-43; Drew, Frederic, p. 437.

28. Panikkar, K.M., *Gulab Singh 1792-1858, Founder of Kashmir*, 1930, p. 141; Drew, Frederic, 437.

29. Drew, Frederic, p. 438.

30. GOI, Fgn, Sec, July 1877, Nos. 34-60B; Drew, Frederic, p. 438.

had certain dues from the people allotted to him; further imposts were made for the Sikh government; a small Sikh force was fixed at Gilgit under a Thanadar, and Nathu Shah himself returned to Kashmir on his way back to the Punjab avoiding Srinagar.³¹

The Succession of the Dogras, 1847

On Kashmir, and with it Gilgit, being ceded to Gulab Singh in 1846, Nathu Shah left the Sikhs and transferred his services to the new ruler, and went to take possession of Gilgit for him. In this there was no difficulty. The Dogra troops relieved the Sikh posts at Astore and Gilgit; most of the Sikh soldiers took service under the new rulers; they were few in number, those at Gilgit being perhaps not more than one hundred.³²

In 1847 Nathu Shah, with the permission of Gulab Singh, allowed Lieutenants Agnew and Young of the Bengal Engineers to visit Gilgit. These officers wrote to the Hunza Raja, Ghazan Khan, asking his leave to enter his territory, but he refused it. He also accused Nathu Shah of having allowed Europeans to come to the frontier, and on this ground attacked Gilgit plundering five villages.³³ Nathu Shah led a force up the valley of the Hunza River to avenge this attack, but his force was destroyed and he himself was killed, as also was Karim Khan, the titular Raja of Gilgit, who had accompanied him.³⁴

Gaur Rahman, too, who at this time governed Punial and Yasin, joined in against the Dogras; the people of Darel joined also; Gilgit fort fell into the hands of these allies.³⁵

To put things right Maharaja Gulab Singh sent two columns of troops, one from Hasora and the other from Baltistan; there

31. Memo on Rulers in Gilgit, GOI, Fgn, Sec, April 1874, Nos. 38-43; Drew, Frederic, p. 438; Panikkar, K.M., *Gulab Singh 1792-1858, Founder of Kashmir*, 1930, p. 142.

32. Hashmetullah Khan, p. 62; Drew, Frederic, p. 439; GOI, Fgn, Sec, July 1877, Nos. 34-60 B.

33. Hashmetullah Khan, p. 783; Drew, Frederic, p. 440.

34. Drew, Frederic, p. 440.

35. Temple, Lt. H.M., *Precis of Information Regarding Lower and Upper Chitral, Hunza and Nagar Part I*, 1877, pp. 48-49; Drew, Frederic, p. 441.

was some fighting, and then peace was made on the basis of the former state of things.³⁶

In 1851 the frontier rose again in rebellion.³⁷ This insurrection was raised by the people of Chilas who were bigoted and fanatical beyond all other Dards, owing, it is said, to Chilas having been at all times a favourite resort to Moollahs from Swat. In former days, Chilas, with the neighbouring valleys of Darel and Gor, owed allegiance to Gilgit, but the Chilasis were notorious for the way in which they tyrannised over the whole surrounding country, making frequent raids, plundering and carrying off men, women, and children into slavery. The Kashmir, Kishengunga, Astore, and Gilgit valleys were frequently laid under contribution, and they boasted of having once plundered Iskardu. During the Sikh occupation of Kashmir, an expedition³⁸, under one Suja Singh,³⁹ was sent against Chilas, but it sustained a disastrous defeat. Permission was granted by the British government, in 1851, to Maharaja Gulab Singh to exact reprisals⁴⁰ for a raid on Astore by the Chilasis in this year.⁴¹ As the Maharaja was then in Jammu and winter was approaching, he confined himself to making preparations for a punitive expedition.⁴² A powerful force under Wazir Zurauru, Colonel Lochan Singh,⁴³ Diwan Hari Chand, Colonel Bijay Singh, Colonel Jowahir Singh and Diwan Thakurdas was despatched in the spring of 1852.⁴⁴ This force entered Chilas in two columns—one from Kashmir by the Lolab valley, and one from Astore by the Mazenoo Pass.⁴⁵

The fort of Chilas was placed in a naturally impregnable position and the Maharaja's forces found great difficulty in besieging it. The country was very barren and the army had

36. GOI, Fgn, Sec, July 1877, Nos. 34-60 B; Hashmetullah Khan, p. 785.

37. *Gulabnama*, p. 386.

38. Major John Biddulph, pp. 15-16.

39. Drew, Frederic, p. 459.

40. Major John Biddulph, p. 16.

41. Hashmetullah Khah, p. 784.

42. *Gulabnama*, p. 386.

43. Hashmetullah Khan, p. 784.

44. *Gulabnama*, p. 386.

45. Major John Biddulph, p. 16.

to depend on provisions taken from Kashmir. These, however, were soon exhausted. Over 1,500 men died in the course of a few weeks. Colonel Bijay Singh was seriously wounded. Confusion prevailed in the ranks and the soldiers were forced to eat 'the leaves of trees and barks of plants'.⁴⁶

The endurance of the Dogra soldier shone out under these trying circumstances. The Maharaja was at that time in very bad health and suffering from dropsy, and anxiety concerning the fate of his army on the frontier was having visible effects on him. But, even in that state of health when the news of the dangerous position of the army before Chilas was conveyed to him, he ordered that preparations should be made for him to start immediately for the frontier.

While these preparations were in progress tidings came that Chilas was conquered by the Dogras.⁴⁷

The story of how the Dogra army, which was put to such straits, conquered the Chilas fort is interesting. The fort was on a high hill, and its water supply depended on one well. The Dogra commander ordered a big hole to be made and drained all the water from the well. Thus deprived of their only source of water the Chilasis surrendered. Their leaders were brought to Srinagar, where they accepted the Maharaja's authority and left their sons as hostages.⁴⁸ They also agreed to pay a yearly tribute of a hundred goats and five tolas of gold, and engaged that the fort of Chilas should not be rebuilt.⁴⁹

Hostilities were not, however, confined to Chilas. In Gilgit also trouble soon broke out which caused the Maharaja to lose all of Dardistan that he possessed on the right bank of the Indus.⁵⁰

The Expulsion of the Dogras, 1852

In 1852 one Sant Singh was Thanadar, or commander, at Gilgit Fort; there was another fort at Naupura, a couple of

46. *Gulabnama*, p. 387.

47. *Ibid.*

48. Hashmetullah Khan, pp. 784-785; Panikkar, K.M., *Gulab Singh 1792-1858, Founder of Kashmir*, 1930, pp. 144 to 145.

49. Major John Biddulph, p. 16.

50. GOI, Fgn, Sec, July 1877, Nos. 34-60 B; Hashmetullah Khan, p. 785.

miles off, held by a Gurkha Regiment of the Maharaja's under Ram Din, commandant; and one Bhup Singh Bhadwal was in command of the reserves at Boonji and Astore.⁵¹

It is not known what it was that made Gaur Rahman to perceive and urged him take advantage of his opportunity. He suddenly brought a force that surrounded and separated the two forts.

Bhup Singh, hearing of this, advanced to their relief with some 1200 men. He crossed the Nila Dhar, a ridge which separated the valley of Sai from that of Gilgit, and reached the bank of the Gilgit River, where there was a narrow space between the water and alluvial cliff; the path here rose from the level of the stream to an alluvial platform two or three hundred feet above it by a narrow gully. But here he found the road stopped by the enemy; the Dards had barricaded every possible channel of access, they had built sangars, or stone breastworks, across every gully that led to the higher ground.⁵² And the Dards had also managed, by passing along difficult mountain paths, to get to the rear of the Dogras, so that their retreat by the way they had come was made equally difficult with their advance. The river by their side was swift and deep, there was no hope to be gained from that; at the same time the Hunza people assembled with adverse intent on the left bank opposite, within gunshot. In short, Bhup Singh was caught in a trap. Thus encircled he was helpless unless by main he could push his way up one of the defiles.⁵³

The Dards then began to play the game of double—dealing in which they were adepts. They promised Bhup Singh provisions, for of these he was quite short, and a safe passage back if he would agree to retire. This he consented to do, and he waited for days in hopes of the food coming; the Dards kept him in expectation, and fed his hopes. Thus for seven days the Dogras were kept without food, and only then, when they were so reduced in strength as to be helpless, did the enemy begin their attack. The Hunza people fired from the left bank, while Gaur

51. Drew, Frederic, p. 441.

52. Col R.C.F. Schomberg, p. 253; Drew, Frederic, p. 441; Hashmetullah Khan, p. 786.

53. Drew, Frederic, pp. 441-442.

Rahman's army sent from the summits of the alluvial cliffs close above a storm of bullets and stones that soon overwhelmed the force.⁵⁴ Near a thousand died on the spot, a hundred or two were taken prisoners and sold into slavery.⁵⁵

While the Maharaja's reserve was thus being disposed of, a somewhat similar tragedy was being done upon his troops at Gilgit and Naupura, who, as we have seen, had been separately surrounded. Naupura was on an alluvial or fan plateau, 250 feet above the Gilgit plain. A detachment of two or three hundred men sallied from Gilgit Fort in order to succour the garrison of Naupura; they divided themselves into two parties, those who went by an upper path were cut to pieces, while the others who went by the lower one succeeded in throwing themselves into the fort. But here, too, rations failed, and, besides, the supply of water was cut off by the enemy. Then began negotiations as before, and the force was allowed to retire; they were allowed to walk down, when, as it is said, one of the Dards made a grab at a gold earring which the commandant wore; this he resisted, and the affray was the signal for a general assault on the Dogra troops. These collected themselves into a walled enclosure—the place abounded with such—and defended themselves gallantly for a whole day, but they were at last overpowered; about 300 were killed and a few were made slaves.⁵⁶

Then came the turn of Gilgit Fort. It is not known exactly how it was managed (for where the destruction was so thorough it was not easy to get the evidence of eye-witnesses), but it is believed that in somewhat the same way all the garrison came into the hands of the Dards and were killed. The Gurkha soldiers in the Maharaja's army, and in the British, used to take their families with them on service; their wives were in Gilgit Fort; these were all killed excepting one, who, throwing herself into the river that flowed by the fort, managed to cross it and to reach the Indus, and to cross that also to Boonji. It is said that she swam the Indus holding on to a cow's tail. At all events she escaped to tell the story, and she was given.

54. Drew, Frederic, p. 442; Col R.C.F. Schomberg, pp. 253-254.

55. Drew, Frederic, p. 442.

56. Drew, Frederic, pp. 442-443.

pension by the Maharaja for rendering this service to the state.⁵⁷

Thus, as said before, the Dogras were expelled from all that part of Dardistan which was on the right bank of the Indus. Gaur Rahman again ruled in Gilgit.⁵⁸

From the time when these events took place, from the year 1852, onwards for eight years, the Maharaja's boundary, below Haramosh, remained at the Indus. A considerable force was kept at Boonji. A few small raids took place* on these troops which called for no important move on the Maharaja's side. Once by way of reprisals an expedition was made into the Sai Valley, but none of the country on that side of the Indus was for a long time occupied. It appears to have been Gulab Singh's fixed policy to advance no further.⁵⁹

Reconquest of Gilgit by the Dogras, 1860

Maharaja Gulab Singh died in 1857. He was succeeded by his son Ranbir Singh in the same year.⁶⁰ Soon after coming to power, Ranbir Singh developed the intention of recovering Gilgit⁶¹ and of rehabilitating the reputation of the Dogras on the frontier.⁶² At first, however, his attention and resources were employed in the operations attending the Indian Mutiny; it was not until 1860 that he found opportunity for settling the affairs of Gilgit in the way he desired.⁶³

In this year a force under the command of a man who was a thorough soldier, Colonel (later General) Devi Singh Narainia, crossed the Indus, and advanced on Gaur Rahman's strong fort at Gilgit which the Dards considered to be absolutely impregnable. But the Dogras were determined to attempt its conquest.⁶⁴

It so chanced that just before Devi Singh's force reached

57. Hashmetullah Khan, p. 738.

58. Drew, Frederic, p. 443.

* The exact dates when these events occurred are not mentioned in the sources.

59. Hashmetullah Khan, p. 10.

60. *Imperial Gazetteer*, p. 28.

61. Drew, Frederic, p. 444.

62. *Imperial Gazetteer*, p. 28.

63. GOI, Fgn, Sec, July 1877, Nos. 34-60 B; Drew, Frederic, p. 444.

64. *Imperial Gazetteer*, p. 28; Hashmetullah Khan, p. 789.

Gilgit, Gaur Rahman himself died. He was, it is thought, in Yasin when he died. The news undoubtedly disheartened his people in Gilgit. They did not offer much resistance to the assault. A cannon-ball which passed through the door of the fort killed the wazir; this persuaded them to give in, and Gilgit again belonged to Jammu, and since then the hold of the Dogras on the fort itself was not lost⁶⁵ until after 1947.

Reckoning, doubtless, on a general disorganization of the Yasin power after Gaur Rahman's death, the Dogra leader determined to advance farther, to follow up the victory. He and his army were actually able to capture both Yasin and Punial. But to hold these territories was no part of their plan, so after few days they retired to Gilgit.⁶⁶

They had, however, placed on the throne at Yasin one Azmat Shah, a son of Suleiman Shah, the old ruler of Yasin. This Azmat Shah being, as near as can be made out, first cousin to Gaur Rahman. The idea was that Azmat Shah at Yasin would remain on peaceable and friendly terms with the Maharaja's authorities at Gilgit. But the plan did not work. No sooner had the Dogra force turned their backs than the Yasini's expelled their nominee, and poor Azmat Shah had to flee for his life. This was all done so quickly that when the Dogra army on their return reached Gilgit, which was but six marches from Yasin, they found Azmat Shah already there a refugee, he having come by a mountain path in his flight.⁶⁷

The other political arrangement respecting Punial, however proved more lasting.⁶⁸ This territory was given to Esau Bahadur, said to be the representative of its old rulers.⁶⁹ It must have been about the time of Sikh invasion of Gilgit that Esau Bahadur incurred the enmity of Gaur Rahman, and was obliged to leave his home; he took refuge first in Gilgit, then in Chilas, and ultimately he came to Kashmir, and there received a grant of land.⁷⁰ When the reconquest of Gilgit was planned,

65. Drew, Frederic, p. 444.

66. Drew, Frederic, p. 444.

67. Hashmetullah Khan, p. 791.

68. Drew, Frederic, p. 445.

69. GOI, Fgn, Sec, July 1877, Nos. 34-60B.

70. Hashmetullah Khan, p. 791.

he accompanied the Maharaja's troops, and as the advance was continued into the country of his hereditary chiefship he was placed in power, and welcomed by the people, who had for some years been subject to the blood thirsty Gaur Rahman. After that time he held Punial as a vassal of the Maharaja.⁷¹

Later Hostilities : 1863 to 1869

At the conclusion of the war, and on the withdrawal of the Dogra force from Yasin to Gilgit in 1860, the state of things was like this. One of Gaur Rahman's sons, Mulk Iman by name, under whose leadership the Yasinis had expelled Azmat Shah, was now the ruler of Yasin. Esau Bahadur held Punial in dependence on the Maharaja. The Maharaja's own officers and troops occupied that part of the country which of old belonged to the Rajaship of Gilgit⁷²

After the war, though for a time peace prevailed, there was a feeling stifled enmity between Yasin and Gilgit, which was sure before long to break into open hostilities. Various events occurred,⁷³ among them the loot and incarceration in Yasin by Mulk Iman of some messengers of the Maharaja's was one. These messengers had been sent by the Maharaja to Badakhshan to buy horses in that country. They were despoiled and imprisoned by the Yasin Chief when they were on their way back to Kashmir. This provoked the Kashmir ruler into sending a punitive expedition to Yasin.⁷⁴

Accordingly, in the spring of 1863 a large force was secretly collected in Gilgit. The force assembled consisted of the "Ram Gol Pultun" of the service of the Maharaja, and other Dogra troops, from 2,000 to 3,000 sepoy, chiefly men of Eusufzye, Boonair, Swat and Pathans—in all, from 5,000 to 6,000 men, under the command of General Hooshiara Singh, Jawahir Singh, Sardar Samad Khan, Kyberi, the Dogra leaders, and Esau Bahadur. They invaded the Yasin territory, surprised the Chief and his followers, who seeing they had no chance to

71. Drew, Frederic, p. 445.

72. Hashmetullah Khan, p. 792.

73. Drew, Frederic, p. 446.

74. Temple, Lt. H.M., *Precis of Information regarding Lower and Upper Chitral, Hunza and Nagar Part I*, 1877, p. 51; Drew, Frederic, p. 446.

resisting such overwhelming odds, fled with their wives and families to the Madoori hill and took refuge in the Marorikot fort. The Chief himself fled to Chitral.⁷⁵

The Yasin villagers who escaped to the hill of Madoori⁷⁶ endeavoured to make terms with the Dogra leaders. A harrowing tale is told by one George Hayward as to what happened hereafter. They were assured that no harm would be done to them if they would evacuate the fort and lay down their arms. They did so in the simple faith that as sworn to them no injury would be done to them. A part of the Dogra forces, which had gone round the fort, then made their appearance amongst the women and children. The men who had surrendered their arms were outside the fort, and unable to protect their wives and little ones, for whom they would doubtless have shed their blood had not treachery beguiled them of their weapons. The Dogras immediately commenced massacring the women and children. They threw the little ones into the air and cut them in two as they fell. It is said that the pregnant women, after being killed, were ripped open, and their unborn babies were cut to pieces. The women who had been wounded, but were not yet dead, were dragged to one spot and were there burnt to death. In all from 1,200 to 1,400 of the Yasin villagers were massacred by the foulest treachery and cruelty.

Hayward says, "after the lapse of seven years I have myself visited the scene of the massacre, and words would be inadequate to describe the touching sight which may be witnessed on this now solitary and desolate hill of Madoori. The fertile valley and rich orchards beneath, the majestic snow-covered mountains and glaciers around, all be-speak a scene of seeming peace and happiness, but the traveller has but to cast his eyes upon the heaps of human skulls and bones lying scattered at his feet to realise the sad tale of treachery and bloodshed. I have myself counted 147 still entire skulls, nearly all those of women and children. Many men and women who were wounded,

⁷⁵. George Hayward to T.H. Thornton, Esq, No. 10, March 7, 1870, GOI, Fgn, S.I, January 1870, Nos. 191-200.

⁷⁶. George Hayward to T.H. Thornton, Esq, No. 10, March 7, 1870, GOI, Fgn, S.I, January, 1870, Nos. 191-200.

and eventually recovered, I have also conversed with, while numerous orphans, whose fathers, mothers, and families all perished in the massacre, are met with in the Yasin territory. One little girl of nine years of age was brought to me with her right arm severed at the shoulder. At the time of the massacre she was a babe at the breast, and the blow which severed her little arm slew her mother also. Her father perished likewise. In one spot, where the massacre seems to have centred, are the blackened remains of rafters mixed with charred human bones. In this place some forty wounded women who were still alive were burnt to death by the Dogra forces."

After killing the women and children, Yasin was burnt and plundered, and all the cattle in the adjoining villages, together with some 2,000 prisoners, were carried off. The Dogras remained one day and night in Yasin, and retired to Gilgit the following day. Many hundreds of these prisoners died of exposure and starvation before they had crossed the Indus. Amongst these prisoners were several hundred women. Samad Khan took away six Yasin women to his Zenana at Udhampur, near Jammu, Jawahir Singh took three for his use, Esau Bahadur ten to twelve, and others likewise.

We may quote Hayward once again, "I am aware of from 25 to 30 Yasin villagers, who are now in confinement in the capital, Srinagar. They are heavily manacled, and in this state are driven to the river's side to quench their thirst, and are only allowed unprepared grain for food. Of the large number of prisoners carried off from Yasin in 1863 but few are now alive; many died of fatigue and want on the way while traces of others cannot be found."⁷⁷

The Government of India, however, did not fully concur in the opinion of Hayward about the atrocities perpetrated by the Kashmir forces in their above mentioned foray on Yasin. They were of the view that his statements on the subject were exaggerated.⁷⁸ And this opinion of theirs must have been based on more reliable information than that supplied by Hayward.

77. *Ibid.*

78. Government of India to the Duke of Argyll, No. 26, May 17, 1870, GOI, Fgn, S.I., 1870, Nos. 201-204; GOI, Fgn, Sec. July 1877. Nos. 34-60B.

The Kashmir attack on Yasin alluded to above was, according to Hayward, a wanton one. He says, "Without having received the slightest provocation, they invaded the Yasin territory, surprised the Chief.....".⁷⁹ But some other authorities on the topic say that the Yasinis had goaded the Maharaja into retaliation by, doing among other things, looting and incarcerating his messengers in Yasin when they were on their way back to Kashmir from Badakhshan.⁸⁰ Hayward thus seems to be alone in thinking the Yasinis to be the victims of an unprovoked onslaught. He therefore appears to have misrepresented the story to the Government of India, and under these circumstances we cannot but agree with the Indian Government in regarding his story of the Dogra troops' cruelties on the Yasinis as a garbled version.

Whether such barbaric cruelties were inflicted upon the Yasinis or not, it is a fact that they were completely defeated. This discomfiture brought them down and made them submissive. The Dogras, indeed, at once retired to their old boundary, but for a few years Yasin was in some sense tributary; that is, the Chief sent his agents to Jammu with presents, and he was anxious to keep on good terms with the Maharaja.⁸¹

In 1866 the Gilgit authorities, with the consent of the Maharaja, arranged an attack on Hunza, the Nagar people promising aid so far as to allow a passage through their country. This, indeed, was aid of the greatest importance, for the difficulty of approaching Hunza, on account of certain defiles to be passed, was probably greater than that of taking the forts when one reached them.⁸²

The Dogra force advanced on the Nagar side of the river, the left bank, and reached a place opposite to and within gunshot of one of the Hunza forts. But the way across the river did not seem easy. The river flowed between cliffs of some

79. George Hayward to T.H. Thornton, Esq. No. 10, March 7, 1870, GOI, Fgn, S.I., January 1870, Nos. 191-200.

80. Temple, Lt. H.M., *Precis of Information regarding Lower and Upper Chitral, Hunza and Nagar, Part I*, 1877, p. 51; Drew, Frederic, p. 446.

81. Drew, Frederic, p. 446.

82. GOI, Fgn. Sec, July 1877, Nos. 34-60B; Drew, Frederic, p. 447,

height—probably alluvium or fan cliffs; and it was said that no practicable road could be found down and up them.⁸³

After a few days it seemed that the Nagar people were beginning to fall away from the alliance. The Dogras began to be suspicious of them, and this distrust very likely brought about its own justification. At last, one evening, a report spread among the Dogras that the Nagaris were upon them; a panic struck them, and they retreated, or more accurately fled, though no enemy was attacking them. In this disgraceful way they returned to Gilgit.⁸⁴

Things did not stop here. This display of weakness on the part of the Dogras caused all their old enemies to combine to try and drive them out of the frontier. A most formidable confederation of all the tribes around was encompassed. Wazir Rahmat, the Yasin Wazir, was, it is said, the soul of this combination. A year or two before he had paid his respects to the Maharaja at Jammu, coming on the part of the Yasin Raja. He had now accompanied the Maharaja's force to Nagar, and for some time after its return had encamped at Gilgit, but one day, leaving his camp, he disappeared and made his way to Yasin.⁸⁵

In a month or two a considerable army of the tribes invaded Gilgit. The Yasin ruler who had fled to Chitral, made a common cause with the Mehtar (ruler) of that country. From Chitral came an expedition under its ruler, Aman-ul-Mulk, himself.⁸⁶ These with the Yasinis and the Darelis surrounded Gilgit Fort, while the Hunza and the Nagar people, now in conjunction, occupied the left bank of the Gilgit river, opposite the fort. The Raja of Chitral was the most important of all the leaders.⁸⁷

This invading force, on its way to Gilgit or soon afterwards, reduced most of the forts of Punial; that is to say, Gakuch, Bubar, etc; through treachery or by force. But the fort of Cher held out. Raja Issu Bahadur himself was within it with 100 of

83. Drew, Frederic, p. 447.

84. Major John Biddulph, p. 29; Drew, Frederic, p. 447.

85. Hashmetullah Khan, pp. 794-795.

86. Drew, Frederic, p. 447.

87. GOI, Fgn, Sec, July 1877, Nos. 34-60B; Hashmetullah Khan, p. 795.

the Maharaja's sepoy, supported by them he even went so far as to expel most of his own people, who, it is said, went and joined—outwardly, for their own safety, and not heartily—the enemy. These, under Mir Wali, brother to the then Raja of Yasin, besieged Cher with vigour, but they could make little impression upon it.⁸⁸

The mass of the invading force had been unable to pass along the usual road on account of the fire from the Cher Fort, but they found a way higher up the mountains, and so approached and invested the Gilgit Fort, on the fate of which hung the fate of the whole valley. The besiegers expected that it soon would fall, for they had heard that it had provisions to last for a week or two only. They closely blockaded it, and were able to repel all the sallies from within it. But, in truth, the fort was better provisioned than they thought.

Meanwhile news of this state had reached Kashmir, and the Maharaja had sent off reinforcements with great despatch under the charge of Wazir Zauru and Colonel Bijay Singh. At Boonji, on the Indus, they met with some opposition; but when once they had effected a landing on the right bank of the river, and the tidings had reached Aman-ul-Mulk, he and his troops and allies decamped and got safely back to their own countries.⁸⁹

The Dogra force now assembled in Gilgit was too large for that country barren as it was. There were, it is said, 3000 soldiers, and they were accompanied by a great number of coolies to carry supplies. The leaders began to revolve in their minds as to what should be done, what punishment should be inflicted, and on whom, as a retribution, for the late invasion. But it was long before they could come to a decision. Wazir Zauru particularly wished to attempt something, but something that was sure of success. An old and trusted servant of the Maharaja's house, now declining in years, he did not wish that his reputation should be dulled at last by a failure. But it was only after they had wasted much time in hesitation that an

⁸⁸. *Ibid.*

⁸⁹. Drew, Frederic, p. 448.

expedition to Darel was determined on.⁹⁰ The Darelis, as we have seen, had joined the confederates against the Dogras. They, therefore, merited punishment.

The expedition started in September, 1866. The main body, under Wazir Zurauru and Colonel Bijay Singh, went by the Naupura ravine, which was almost exactly in front of Gilgit. Another division, under Bakhshi Radha Krishan, went up a side valley from Singal. The only opposition met with was to the main force. This having crossed the dividing ridge of the mountains, was passing down along a ravine, at some distance above the place where the ravine debouched into the main Darel valley. A breastwork formed of felled trees and stones was met with; this was defended by Mulk Iman of Yasin, with some of his own people, who were more used to fighting than were the Darelis. Bijay Singh, however, an experienced and wary soldier, knew what was the right thing to do; he scaled the heights and turned the position, and the enemy had to flee. In a day or two after this the other column joined. The main column had made six marches to the first village fort in Darel, the other column four marches. There was no more opposition, the country of Darel lay open to the Dogras.⁹¹

The Darel valley led south-ward to the Indus. There were seven village-forts in it; the Dogras only reached four of them. The one they came to first was the highest in the valley. All the inhabitants had fled to the mountains, there was not even a woman or a child to be seen; even the cattle had all been driven off. The Dogras stayed a week. Some of the chief men of Darel came in, made the submission and agreed to pay tribute.⁹² A few of them, who had been captured, were hanged⁹³, and then the troops returned, not without a considerable difficulty owing to an unusually early fall of snow, which occasioned the loss of over a hundred men,⁹⁴ chiefly of the

90. *Ibid.*, p. 449.

91. GOI, Fgn, Sec, July 1877, Nos. 34-60B; Major John Biddulph, p. 14; Drew, Frederic, p. 449.

92. Hashmetullah Khan, p. 797.

93. Major John Biddulph, p. 14.

94. *Ibid.*

accompanying Kashmiri coolies.⁹⁵ The Dogras certainly had shown the Darelis that their country was not inaccessible, and doubtless they left their mark on it. After this, a great part of the force returned to Kashmir, and the usual garrison was left behind at Gilgit.⁹⁶

In the next year the untiring Yasinis invaded Punial, attacking the fort of Bubar. But there were some of the Maharaja's irregulars, and they, with Raja Isau Bahadur, held out and made sallies; so the enemy was held in check until Bakhshi Radhan Krishan arrived with some troops from Gilgit and relieved the place, the Yasinis at once retreating.⁹⁷

The State of Nagar became tributary to Kashmir in 1868. The quantum of the annual payment was twenty-one tolas of gold and two baskets of apricots.⁹⁸ In return for this small tribute Nagar received a subsidy of a larger value.⁹⁹

In 1869 the Hunza state also acknowledged the suzerainty of the Kashmir state consenting to pay a yearly tribute of two horses, two hounds, and twenty ounces of gold-dust, and to receive in return an annual subsidy.¹⁰⁰

95. Drew, Frederic, p. 450.

96. Hashmetullah Khan, pp. 797-798.

97. Drew, Frederic, p. 450.

98. Major John Biddulph, p. 25.

99. Drew, Frederic, p. 457.

100. Major John Biddulph, p. 29; Kak, B.L., *The Fall of Gilgit*, 1977, p. 8.

2

Establishment of the Gilgit Agency

(A) The Circumstances Leading to it

The establishment of the Gilgit Agency in the year 1877 was owing, as we shall presently see, to Russia's territorial expansion in Central Asia in the 18th and 19th centuries and British India's reaction to this spirit of aggrandisement of hers.

It was in 1579 that a Jesuit priest, Thomas Stevens, arrived in Goa aboard a Portuguese ship. Stevens was the first Englishman to set foot on Indian soil. He spent the next forty years of his life doing missionary work among the natives. However, in the annals of British rule in India, Stevens is remembered less for his evangelistic accomplishments than for the impetus which his letters to his father are reported to have provided to London merchants for Eastern trade. It is unnecessary to go into details how the interest thus awakened led to the establishment of the East India Company in 1599.¹

By 1765 the Company had won territory in Bengal as far north as the twenty-seventh degree of latitude. Forty years later, by pushing northwards along the edge of the Himalayas, its frontiers crossed latitude 31° and came into contact with the Sikh Kingdom which the formidable Ranjit Singh had created north of the Sutlej. The final collapse of what was left of that Kingdom, and the subsequent annexation of the Punjab in 1849, brought the direct rule of the British to the north of Peshawar. Indirectly, British influence reached across the dependent

1. Samra, Chattar Singh, *India and Anglo-Soviet Relations 1917-1947*, 1959, p. 2.

territories of Maharaja Gulab Singh as far as the Karakoram Pass.² Across this Pass, in Central Asia, the British started taking commercial interest.³

North and East of the Karakoram Pass, beyond the Kuen-lun range and as far west as the skirts of the Pamirs, were the lands which had been added to the Manchu Empire by the Chinese in 1759. At about this time Afghanistan was being consolidated into a political entity for the first time by Ahmad Shah Abdali, and his northern boundary ran along the River Oxus. The lands between the Hindukush and the Oxus—Afghan Turkistan—were won and lost by Kabul several times, but eventually, in 1869, Sher Ali emerged from a six-year struggle for supremacy as Amir of Kabul. In the following years his power was successfully extended to the Oxus, and along it on the north-east into Badakhshan and Wakhan as far as the western edge of the Pamirs.

The Russian Penetration

The fourth power to impinge upon the area in modern times was Russia.⁴ Somewhat greater details of how this happened may be necessary, for it was mainly Russophobia which ultimately led to the establishment of the Gilgit Agency.

Commercial and strategic needs propelled Russia to penetrate into Central Asia.⁵ Control of this region, with its unrivalled market and suspected rich raw materials, was of considerable importance for Russia's capitalist development.⁶ As to strategic needs, Terenty-ef, describing the process of Central Asian conquests, describes it to "sheer necessity" or the inexorable law of "historical necessity". He thus says, "sheer necessity forced us to plant settlements on the farthermost limits of our possessions and indeed experience has

2. Alder, G.J., *British India's Northern Frontier*, hereafter quoted as Alder, G.J., 1963, p. 1.

3. Report from the Diplomatic Agent attached to the Go-Ge of Turkistan, dated 19th/21st February, 1878, GOI, Fgn, Sec, May 1879, Nos. 62-68; Allworth, Edward, *Central Asia: A Century of Russian Rule*, 1967, p. 131.

4. Alder, G.J., p. 1.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

6. Allworth, Edward, *Central Asia: A Century of Russian Rule*, 1967, p. 131.

abundantly proved that the natural path to the security of our eastern frontier lies forward. History has ordained that we should advance, although in so doing we have invariably acted with reluctance and the incursions of the nomad tribes have been the immediate cause. In this contest with the historical necessity of a perpetual advance is contained the whole interest of our Central Asian movement".⁷ More pithily and less apologetically, an Englishman later described the imperial drive for expansion as 'the natural impulse of the civilised to overrun the uncivilised on their borders'.⁸

The weak, materially backward tribes living on the frontiers of civilised powerful states, or the militarily backward oriental States, resisting the rapid advance of western imperialism, have always afforded a pretext to the latter to annihilate or absorb them, impelled either by motives of self-protection or in the interest of humanity and civilisation. This inevitable law of "historical necessity" compelled "reluctant" and apparently "undesigned" movements of the British and Russian empires in Asia, and as their expanding glacies approached nearer, engendered jealousy and conflict between them, which had further repercussions on the freedom of the Asian peoples.⁹

Whatever be the motives behind Russia's penetration into Central Asia, it is a hard fact that she did so. Her first serious expedition into Central Asia was undertaken at the end of the sixteenth century by the Kassak (Cossack) tribe, under their celebrated Chief, Yermak. These Cossacks were, as their name implies, merely a tribe of outlaws and free booters, who called themselves "The Good Companions of the Don", but the Czar, in order to turn their energies to good purpose, offered them a free pardon if they would assist him against the wild tribes on the other side of the Urals. They accepted the offer, and, crossing the mountains, found their way to the Caspian Sea, where they occupied themselves with piracy and with plundering the

7. Prasad Bisheshwar, *The Foundation of India's Foreign Policy 1860-1882*, 1967, p. 13.

8. Maxwell, Neville, *India's China, War 1970*, p. 20.

9. Prasad Bisheshwar, *The Foundation of India's Foreign Policy 1860-1882*, 1967, p. 13.

Persian colonies. They were, later, also successful in their engagements with the Trans-Ural nomad tribes, whom they completely defeated, taking possession of Sibir, the capital of Kuchum (a lineal descendant of Genghiz Khan), and so giving Russia her first foothold in Asia. Such was the birth of Russian power in the enormous territory since known to the world as Siberia.

Early in the 17th century, some of the Cossacks who had crossed the Urals brought back wonderful tales of riches in the oasis of Khiva, and a troop started thither to explore.¹⁰ The Cossacks rode across the Kirghiz steppe in light marching order, without having any baggage with them save that which could be carried on their saddles.¹¹ After crossing the Oxus, they attacked one of the principal towns in Khiva, Urgentch.¹² The Khan and his forces were absent. Little resistance was made, and the town was destroyed, the Cossacks carrying off a thousand¹³ of the youngest and most comely women for their household requirements,¹⁴ besides many carts laden with a rich booty¹⁵; but encumbered with this extra baggage, they were overtaken and surrounded by the Khivans, who shut them off from water.¹⁶ They fought desperately for several days, quenching their thirst with the blood of the slain. Human nature, however, has its limits. And though a hundred of them cut their way through and managed to conceal themselves for a time, all eventually perished.¹⁷

The Cossacks did not recover very rapidly from this serious blow. After a time they once more marched upon Khiva in a

10. GOI, Fgn, Sec, June 1882, Nos. 53-55; Colquhoun R. Archibald, *Russia Against India*, hereafter quoted as Archibald, 1900, pp. 3-4.

11. Burnaby, Fred, "A Ride to Khiva", *Travels and Adventures in Central Asia*, hereafter quoted as Burnaby Fred, 1878, p. 248.

12. Burnaby, Fred, p. 248; Archibald, p. 4.

13. Burnaby, Fred, p. 248.

14. Stumm, Hugo, *The Russian Campaign Against Khiva in 1873*, hereafter quoted as Stumm, Hugo, 1876, pp. 10-11; Archibald, p. 4.

15. Burnaby, Fred, p. 248.

16. Archibald, pp. 4-5.

17. Burnaby, Fred, pp. 248-249; Archibald, p. 5.

band of five hundred strong, under the command of Ataman Nechai. The raid was made successfully; but when returning with their spoil the Cossacks were overtaken. The Khivans slew them to a man.¹⁸

A third campaign was equally disastrous. The Cossacks lost their way. Instead of reaching Khiva, they found themselves by the shores of the Sea of Aral. The winter came on; frosts commenced, storms raged, provisions were exhausted. At first the Cossacks killed some of their number, and lived upon the dead bodies. Finally they went to the Khivans and voluntarily gave themselves up into slavery.¹⁹

For the fourth time the Russians made war upon Khiva in the reign of Peter the Great²⁰ (1682-1725).²¹ This monarch was fully aware of the advantages to be gained by taking possession of the country. The report that there was auriferous sand in the River Amu, and that the Khivans purposely concealed this circumstance for fear of bringing the Russians to the Khanate, also attracted, the Tzar's attention.²² Secondly, it was part of Peter's general policy to move the Russian frontiers farther east and, among other things, to give Russia an opportunity to act as an intermediary in the trade between Europe and Asia.²³ Thirdly and finally, he was determined to open out mercantile relations with India via Khiva.²⁴

Prince Bekovitch Tcherkassky advanced across the Ust Urt into Khivan territory²⁵ at the head of a strong force. After a fight which lasted three days the Khivans were defeated. A truce was declared, when the prince, thinking himself secure, was so idiotic as to divide his troops. The latter were at once attacked, and cut to pieces by their enemy.²⁶

18. Burnaby, Fred, p. 249.

19. Stumm, Hugo, p. 11; Burnaby, Fred, p. 249.

20. Burnaby, Fred, p. 249,

21. Clarkson, D. Jesse, *A History of Russia*, 1962, p. 215.

22. Burnaby, Fred, p. 249.

23. W.P. and Zelda K. Coates, *Soviets in Central Asia*, 1951, p. 43.

24. Burnaby, Fred, p. 249.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 250.

26. Memo by the Foreign office, October, 30, 1926, GOI, Fgn and Pol, Confdl, File No. 264-X of 1927, Nos. 1-114; Burnaby Fred, p. 250.

Peter died in 1725.²⁷ After his death Russian affairs in Asia were for some time less successfully conducted, and Russia remained occupied with her European conquests.²⁸

Towards the end of the 18th century, in the reign of the Empress Catherine II, a scheme was contemplated, the first of its kind, for invading India through the Khanates of Central Asia—a scheme which was, however, never carried into effect.²⁹ There were only two reasons for Russia's being aggressive towards British India. First, it was not possible for Russia, without command of the sea, to defeat England in Europe.³⁰ And, secondly, Russia was of the view that she could, by making military demonstrations against India, induce Great Britain to alter her hostile policy in Europe towards the Czarist regime.³¹

In 1801 another plan was drawn by Russia for an invasion of India.³² She had Napoleon's support for this project and in a joint communique issued by them it was stated: "The sufferings under which the populations of India groan have inspired France and Russia with the liveliest interest; and the governments have resolved to unite their forces in order to liberate India from the tyrannical and barbarious yoke of the English."³³

Paul I, the Czar of Russia, moved his troops into the Caucasus and united Georgia to the Empire. The invasion of India was to be the work of two expeditions. The first was to march through Khiva and Bokhara to the Indus. The other was to consist of 35,000 French and 35,000 Russians. The army of 35,000 French was to descend the Danube to Taganrog, thence to ascend the Don and cross by an easy portage to the Volga, and from the mouth of the Volga navigate the Caspian to Astrabad, where the army of 35,000 Russians would await it. The combined armies, would then descend on India through

27. Archibald, p. 8.

28. *Ibid.*

29. *Ibid.*

30. Alder, G.J, p. 2.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 304.

32. Memo by the Foreign Office, October 30, 1926, GOI, Fgn and Pol., Confdl, File No. 264-X of 1927, Nos. 1-114.

33. Naik, J.A., *Soviet Policy Towards India*, 1970, p. 3.

Herat and Kandahar. The details of the plan, with marginal notes by Bonaparte, were worked out with great precision, and every step was taken to provide for the various needs of the expedition. The project was abandoned when the assassination of Paul I broke the coalition.³⁴

His successor, Alexander I, revived the old plan, with Napoleon again, and they agreed to issue a proclamation to be given to the rulers on the Indian borders, when they would meet them on their way to India. The proclamation ran as under :

“The army of the two most powerful nations in the world is to pass through their domain in order to reach India ; that the sole aim of this expedition consists in driving out of Hindustan the British who have enslaved these beautiful lands once so renowned, mighty and rich in products and industries that they attracted the peoples of the whole universe to partake of the gifts which it had pleased heaven to lavish upon them; that the terrible state of oppression, misery, and slavery under which the peoples of these countries now groan has inspired the most lively sympathy of France and Russia; that in consequence of this these two States have decided to unite their forces for the liberation of India from the tyrannous yoke of the British; that there is nothing to be feared on the part of the rulers and peoples of the countries through which the allied army has to pass.”

Alexander I wrote to Napoleon that he had instructed his Generals to work out the details of the plan but before the proposed plan could take some concrete shape it was again abandoned due to some developments in Europe.³⁵

After being unsuccessful in launching an onslaught on India earlier, Russia began, in 1839, a policy of slow but systematic advance in Central Asia. In the winter of that year she sent an expedition under General Perovski, ostensibly to obtain the release of Russian prisoners in Khiva; but in reality, the object

34. Memo by the Foreign Office, October 30, 1926, GOI, Fgn and Pol, Confdl, File No. 264-X of 1927, Nos. 1-114.

35. Naik, J.A., *Soviet Policy Towards India*, 1970, pp. 3-4.

was to obtain paramount influence over Afghanistan. That winter, however, proved to be one of almost unprecedented rigour in Central Asia, and after horrible sufferings, entailed by the effort to march in blinding storms with snow almost waist-high, the troops returned to Orenburg, leaving more than a thousand dead. This expedition, nevertheless, convinced the Khivans that Russia was in earnest, and to avert another campaign, the Khan made overtures, but it was not till 1842 that a Treaty of peace was concluded.³⁶

After this the Russian government sent up an expedition to the Syr Daria with the object of founding a fort there. The Khokandians viewed these advances with much uneasiness, and resisted to the best of their power. AK—Musjid, the important fortress of Khokand³⁷, subsequently called Fort Perovski from the name of its captor,³⁸ was twice besieged—in 1852, and again in the following year—and finally captured. Several attempts were made to regain it, and great numbers of Khokandians killed, but it remained in the hands of the Russians.³⁹

An important development took place in the year 1854. A scheme, fourth of its kind, for the invasion of India was prepared by General Duhamel, and presented to the Czar, to whom it was pointed out that there were five routes by which Russia might proceed, and that if the friendship of Afghanistan in particular could be gained, the path to victory would be easy. The victories of the armies of England and France⁴⁰ in the Crimean War (1854-56),⁴¹ prevented the realization of this scheme.⁴²

The capture of AK—Musjid was a landmark in the history of Russian advance in Central Asia. For eight years it was apparently the extreme point reached by Russia. Her policy

36. Archibald, p. 12.

37. Position of Russia in Central Asia, GOI, Fgn, Sec I, 1869, Nos. 63-65; Archibald, p. 17.

38. GOI, Fgn, Sec, June 1882, Nos. 53-55.

39. Position of Russia in Central Asia, GOI, Fgn, and Sec I, 1869, Nos. 63-65; Archibald, p. 17.

40. Archibald, p. 18.

41. Chakravarti, P.C., *The Evolution of India's Northern Borders*, 1971, p. 131.

42. Archibald, p. 18.

at this period was not so much to assert her supremacy as a paramount power as to appear as the protector of the Kirghizes against the oppression of the Khokandee Governors; and thus they were assisted in all their operations by the Kirghiz tribes in the neighbourhood.

Meanwhile Khohand was distracted by the tyranny of its ruler, Khudayar Khan. He was deposed by his elder brother, Malle Khan, and fled to Bokhara. The Amir of Bokhara made this an excuse to espouse his cause, and establish his own supremacy in Khokand. He, in 1860, marched against Khokand, but concluded a Treaty with Malle Khan without coming to blows.

Affairs thus went on till 1865, the government of Khokand changing hands several times till Khudayar Khan once more became Khan, as will presently be seen.⁴³

From 1860 Khokand was engaged in almost continued internal dissensions and conflict with the Russians in front, whilst threatened by Bokhara on its left rear. The new Khan, Malle Khan, died in 1861, and was succeeded by Murad Beg II. He was in the same year deposed by the Amir of Bokhara, who placed Khudayar Khan as a vassal of Bokhara again on the throne. Khudayar Khan was, however, obliged soon to flee the country, being hated for his oppressions, and to take refuge in Bokhara. On this Murad Beg was reinstated, but deposed in a few days by the Prime Minister, Alam Kul, who put Said Mahomed, a boy of 12 years of age, son of Malle Khan, on the throne, who reigned till 1865.⁴⁴

In 1864 Said Mahomed despatched an Envoy to the British Government of India⁴⁵ with two letters, one for the Queen and the other for the Viceroy, Lord Lawrence⁴⁶, and asked to be sent to him as many experienced artillerymen and instructors as possible, in consideration of his friendship with the British

43. Position of Russia in Central Asia, GOI, Fgn, Sec I, 1869, Nos. 63-65.

44. Position of Russia in Central Asia, GOI, Fgn, Sec I, 1869, Nos. 63-65.

45. *Ibid.*

46. Prasad Bisheshwar, *The Foundation of India's Foreign Policy, 1860-1882*, 1967, p. 27.

Government.⁴⁷ Lawrence met the Envoy at Lahore in October 1864, gave him friendly advice, but declined to help the Khan as his territories were too remote to admit of British interference.⁴⁸ The same thing was reiterated by the Viceroy in his letter, dated February 21, 1865, to the Khan.⁴⁹

In this same month the Russians, after a fruitless endeavour to come to terms with Khokand, advanced and captured Chemkund. They afterwards moved on to Sharabkhana (half way to Tashkand), but were driven back by Khokand to Chemkund. On this occasion the Prime Minister of Khokand carried away 60 heads of Russians as trophies of war, and sent them to Yakoob Beg at Kashgar. For this defeat General Tchernayeff was afterwards recalled to St. Petersburg, and succeeded by General Romanoffski.⁵⁰ The operations which concluded with the capture of Chemkund, had been carried on, as we have seen, against the forces of Khokand, unaided by the Amir of Bokhara, who was, indeed, continually at war with his neighbour. In May 1865 the Khan of Khokand was killed, and the Khanate fell into a state of anarchy, encouraged by the Amir of Bokhara who thought it a favourable time for prosecuting his designs on the country.

About 80 miles south of Chemkund was the important city of Tashkand, originally an independent town, but annexed to Khokand some years previously. On the death of the Khan in 1865 the inhabitants were divided into three factions, one of which desired to regain its independence, the second wished to establish the protectorate of Bokhara, while the third leaned towards Russia.

General Tchernayeff, on learning this state of affairs at Tashkand, determined to advance on that town, and support

47. From Moola Ulee Koolee, The Kokan Minister, to the Viceroy of India, Sir John Lawrence, year 1281 A.H. i.e. 1865 GOI, Fgn, Pol-A, February 1865, Nos. 151-154.

48. Position of Russia in Central Asia, GOI, Fgn, Sec-I, 1869, Nos. 63-65.

49. From Moola Ulee Koolee, The Kokan Minister, to Sir John Lawrence, year 1281 A.H. i.e., 1865, GOI, Fgn, Pol-A, February 1865, Nos. 151-154.

50. Position of Russia in Central Asia, GOI, Fgn, Sec-I, 1869, Nos. 63-65.

the Russian party. Accordingly he marched on the 29th May, and on the 11th June assaulted the city, and occupied a considerable portion of it. On the following day the citadel was taken and blown up, and on the 29th June 1865, the principal inhabitants presented themselves before the General, and surrendered the town to him unconditionally.⁵¹

These campaigns did not seem to excite much apprehension in Great Britain, and Lord Lawrence was inculcating the doctrine that "Russia might prove a safer neighbour than the wild tribes of Central Asia". Nevertheless, the Russian Chancellor, Prince Gortchakoff, felt it necessary to explain the position and intentions of his country to the world at large, and accordingly issued the now famous circular of November 21, 1864, which explained the Asiatic policy of Russia, and utterly denied her intention of acquiring any further dependencies in Central Asia.⁵² But this declaration on the part of Russia seemed to be just an eye-wash, for she continued to acquire territory in Central Asia, as well be seen, till the year 1893.

At the time of the occupation of Tashkand, the Amir of Bokhara was at Khojend, a city of Khokand, south of the Syr Daria, on which river the fort of Chinaz had been occupied by General Tchernayyoff, prior to the assault on Tashkand. The relations between Russia and Bokhara had not been friendly before this event; all diplomatic inter-course appears to have ceased for some years, and the annual caravans were occasionally stopped by an embargo imposed by either power. On learning the fall of Tashkand, the Amir summoned General Tchernayyoff to evacuate the city and upon the demand being refused, proposed a line of demarcation, not to be crossed by the Russians. The proposal was also declined by the General on the ground that it was necessary for the defence and safety of Tashkand that he should occupy some of the country in front of it.⁵³

In July 1865 the Amir sent an envoy, with a considerable suite, to St. Petersburg. The Mission was, however, stopped

51. GOI, Fgn, Sec, June 1882. Nos. 35-55.

52. Archibald, p. 20.

53. GOI, Fgn, Sec, June 1882, Nos. 53-55.

on the Russian frontier by the Governor-General of Orenburg, General Krjani-of-sky, and was informed that, as the latter had full power to treat with the Amir on all questions, it was useless to send an embassy to St. Petersburg.⁵⁴

About September 1865 a fresh envoy arrived at Tashkand with overtures, to which the General listened favourably, and responded by a letter to the Amir, which was entrusted to a mission headed by Councillor Struwe.

The mission started for Bokhara at the end of October 1865, and was well received at Smmarkand, but towards the end of November it was learnt that all its members had been arrested. A demand for explanation was met by an insolent answer from the Amir, who refused to liberate the mission until his Ambassador was allowed to proceed to St. Petersburg, and to return with an answer providing the intentions of the Russians to be amicable.

General Tchernayyoff immediately put his troops in motion, crossed the Syr Daria, and advanced nearly to the fort of Jeezakh, on the road from Chinaz to Samarkand, whence, however, he was speedily compelled, by want of supplies, to retreat to the river where the troops remained constantly harassed by parties of Bokharians and Khokandians on both banks.⁵⁵

These transactions naturally caused great excitement, and all sorts of reports as to the Russian designs and the strength of their forces reached the Government of India through native channels. They were sent on in due course to the Secretary of State.

In March 1866 General Romanoffski succeeded General Tchernayyoff in the command of Turkistan, and took the field in the middle of May. The Amir's army was totally defeated at Irdjar; the fortress of Nau was taken; and early in June the important town of Khojend was stormed, with enormous loss to the Bokharians. The Amir then released the Russian prisoners.⁵⁶

On September 8, 1866, General Romanoffski "by desire of

54. *Ibid.*

55. GOI, Fgn, Sec, June 1882, Nos. 53-55.

56. Position of Russia in Central Asia, GOI, Fgn, Sec-I, 1869, Nos. 63-65; GOI, Fgn, Sec, June 1882, Nos. 53-55.

the inhabitants", and according to his own statement, with the Imperial assent, declared Tashkand formally annexed to the Russian Empire. On September 26, "in compliance with the reiterated wishes of the inhabitants",⁵⁷ the annexation of Khojend also was proclaimed.

As, notwithstanding the release of the Russian Mission, the Amir of Bokhara still refused to enter into amicable relations, and continued to maintain a menacing aspect, military operations were pushed forward. The fort of Uriatube was stormed on October 14, and, on 30, Jeezakh, midway between Khojend and Samarkand, shared the same fate.⁵⁸ The Amir of Bokhara, evidently frightened at the steady advances of Russia, despatched an envoy in November 1866 to India, with presents for the Viceroy and the Queen, bringing forward in his letters complaints against the Russians, and applying for assistance. The Viceroy gave the envoy good advice, but declined to give assistance on the same grounds that he refused Khokand.⁵⁹

The military operations leading to the capture of the fort of Uriatube and Jeezakh were, however, in contravention of the orders of the Russian Government. The authorities at St. Petersburg, therefore, declared that the responsibility for these conquests lay entirely with General Romanoffski, who was summoned to the capital, and the British were informed that on the arrival of the General a Committee would meet to consider the policy to be hereafter pursued in Central Asia, and that a programme sanctioned by the Emperor would be adopted for the guidance of the officers on the spot, who would be informed that if any of them departed from it without express authority, they would be brought before a court-martial.⁶⁰

The immediate fruit of the conference at St. Petersburg was the creation of the province of Turkistan into a Government independent of that of Orenburg, described, in the

57. GOI, Fgn, Sec, June 1882, Nos. 53-55.

58. *Ibid.*

59. Position of Russia in Central Asia, GOI, Fgn, Sec-I, 1869, Nos. 63-65.

60. GOI, Fgn, Sec, June 1882, Nos. 53-55.

Imperial Ukase of July 23, 1867, as comprising, in addition to Turkistan, Tashkand, and some districts on the Chinese frontier, the territories beyond the Syr Daria occupied in 1866. General Kaufmann was appointed Governor-General of the new province.⁶¹

In 1867 a formal Trade Treaty was concluded by General Kaufmann with Khokand. The principal stipulations were that all towns were to be open to Russian merchants, who might appoint commercial Agents, and that the duty of $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent; the limit accorded specially to Muslims, should alone be levied on Russian merchandise, instead of from 5 to 10 per cent as before.

As a consequence of this Treaty allowing the Russians to traverse Khokand in all directions for purposes of trade and industry, Mr. Munzof, an Engineer, discovered Naptha in great abundance at a place about 16 miles from Namangan.

A similar Treaty was made with Bokhara shortly afterwards.⁶² The Ulamas of Bokhara, however, objected to the Article, declaring that unbelievers should pay no more duty than Muslims, upon which the Mir was induced to send back the Treaty to General Kaufmann. In consequence of this General Kaufmann in March 1868 advanced on Samarkand, defeated the Mir's army, and took possession of the town, after which the Mir agreed to the Treaty.⁶³

Having now subjugated Bokhara, the Russian government could not allow the last of the Central Asian Khanates, Khiva, to survive. Perovski's expedition in 1839 had proved a disastrous failure. Not much more was heard of Khiva thereafter until 1859, when a large Russian force, avowedly for the purpose of reconnoitring, was despatched to the East of the Caspian.

The Turkomans, who did not like this survey of their country, attacked the expedition near Balkan Bay, and seized

61. Position of Russia in Central Asia, GOI, Fgn, Sec-I, 1869, Nos. 63-65; GOI, Fgn, Sec, June 1882, 53-55; SSI to Government of India, No. 7, April 8, 1868, GOI, Fgn, Pol-A, May 1868, Nos. 121-122.

62. Position of Russia in Central Asia, GOI, Fgn, Sec-I, 1869, Nos. 63-65.

63. *Ibid.*

the Russian camel train and baggage. The commander was thus prevented from making a map of the Balkan hills. However, he recommended the construction of a fort near Krasnovodsk Bay, under the pretext of opening out friendly relations with the Turkomans. He then sailed to Ashourade and to Hassan Kuli Bay, where he bombarded a Turkoman settlement, and took Chikishlar.

The Russians commenced building a new fort at Krasnovodsk Bay in the autumn of 1869. A station was formed in 1870 at Tash Arvat-Kala, 103 miles from Krasnovodsk. Two military intermediate posts were also established, one on the shore of Michael Bay, at a place called Mikhailovsk, and another on the Aktam, at Mulla Kari. A connecting link of communication was thus formed with the headquarters at Krasnovodsk. Chikishlar was occupied in the month of November, 1871, and a fort erected there by Colonel Markosoff. Ashourade was Persian territory. However, this did not prevent its occupation by the Tsar's forces.

The Russians were now established at four points in and about Turkoman territory; in the island of Ashourade; in the Mangyshlak Peninsula, by Attrek; and in Krasnovodsk Bay.⁶⁴

Everything was ready, and nothing wanted save some pretext for an advance upon Khiva. A *casus belli* soon presented itself; but in order to explain how matters were finally brought to a head, it will be necessary to return for a moment to the year 1869.

Amongst the nomad Kirghiz was a tribe known as the Adayefs. When Fort Nova-Alexandrovsk was erected on the Mangyshlak Isthmus, the Russian government felt that it was strong enough to tax this people. The latter were in the habit of paying taxes to Khiva, but this did not avail them with the Tzar's officials, and a forced contribution of one rouble and fifty Kopecks was levied from each Kibitka, as rent. This was in 1850; but in 1869 a fresh system was introduced, and the taxes extorted from the Adayefs were raised 150 per cent.⁶⁵

64. Burnaby, Fred, pp. 250-252.

65. *Ibid.*, p. 252.

This gave rise to great dissatisfaction, and in March, 1870, hostilities commenced between the Adayefs and the Russians. The Khan of Khiva backed up the people whom he looked upon as his subjects. He had been alarmed at the occupation of Krasnovodsk, and now finding that General Kaufmann was bent on war, despatched to him an interesting letter which read : —

“From the beginning of the world up to the present time there has never been an instance of one Sovereign, in order to reassure another, and for the well-being of the subjects of a foreign power, having erected a fort on the frontier, and having advanced his troops. Our sovereign desires that the White Tsar, following the example of his forefathers, should not permit himself to be led away by the greatness of the Empire with which God has entrusted him, and should not seek to gain possession of the lands of other powers, which is opposed to the custom of great Sovereigns”.

At the same time, however, the letter warned that the Tsar should not think that he, having superior armed forces, was sure to win the day in a conflict against Khiva. For, everything, according to the Khan, was predestined.

In the meantime the Adayefs, who at the outset of their quarrel with the Russians had destroyed a convey, and attacked Fort Alexandrovsk, had been completely overcome by a detachment of troops despatched from the Caucasus. Some Cossacks, who had been taken prisoners by the Kirghiz and brought to Khiva, were detained there by the Khan.⁶⁶

In the beginning of 1872 the latter sent two Embassies, one to the Viceroy of the Caucasus, and the other to the Emperor. In his letter to the Viceroy the Khan wrote :—

That harmony had existed between the two governments but in 1871 Russian troops had landed at Cheleken, on the shores of the Bay of Khaurism and were advancing towards the Sary Kamysh, which had of old belonged to the Khivans; that Russian troops had advanced from Tashkand and AK Musjid as far as the well of Min Bulak, which was situated within Khivan hereditary dominions; that the Khivans were

66. *Ibid.*, pp. 252-253.

ignorant whether the Grand Duke (the Viceroy) knew of these proceedings or not; that, meanwhile, on the Khivan side, no such action had been taken as could violate friendly relations with Russia; that some Kirghiz had seized a few Russian people who were now safe with the Khivans; that if Russia wished to maintain friendly relations with the Khivans, she should conclude such conditions as would leave each of them satisfied with their former frontiers, and that the Khivans would restore to the Russians all their captives; but that if these captives were made to serve simply as a pretext for a war, of which the real object was the extension of their territories, God's will being unavoidable, would have its way.⁶⁷

The Embassy to the Emperor, however, was not allowed to go to St. Petersburg. The envoys were informed that no communications would be held with them until the prisoners had been released. The Khan now despatched a mission to India. The then Viceroy of the country, Lord Northbrook, in common with many liberals considered that Russia, by making conquests in Central Asia, was carrying out an important civilizing mission among the lawless, slave-dealing tribes on her frontier. He, therefore, rejected the mission's appeal for help against Russia⁶⁸ and advised them to restore the Russian prisoners; and to make peace with Russian government.⁶⁹

The Russian Chancellor, Prince Gortchakoff, afterwards heard of this refusal to aid Khiva. He remarked that this was in perfect harmony with the understanding which existed between the Imperial government and that of Her Majesty, and that it had given him great pleasure.

The authorities in Great Britain were quite tranquillized as to any intention on the part of the Russian government to annex Khiva. All their doubts on this subject had been put at rest by a statement made to Lord Granville by Count Schouvaloff, on the 8th of January, 1873, who had arrived in

67. *Ibid.*, pp. 253-254.

68. Edward, C. Moulton, *Lord Northbrook's Indian Administration 1872-1876*, 1968, p. 230.

69. Burnaby, Fred, p. 254.

England as an emissary from the Tsar. The words used by the latter were to this effect ;

With regard to the expedition to Khiva, it was true that it was decided upon for next spring. To give an idea of its character, it was sufficient to say that it would consist of four and a half Battalions. Its object was to punish acts of brigandage, to recover fifty Russian prisoners, and to teach the Khan that such conduct on his part could not be continued with the impunity in which the moderation of Russia had led him to believe. Not only was it far from the intention of the Emperor to take possession of Khiva, but positive orders had been prepared to prevent it, and directions given that the conditions imposed should be such as could not in any way lead to a prolonged occupancy of Khiva.⁷⁰

The Khivan expedition came in 1873. We have mentioned before that Russia expected many advantages to flow from the conquest of Khiva. General Kaufmann, therefore, contrary to the assurance given to Granville by Count Schouvaloff that the expedition to Khiva would consist of four and a half Battalion, employed a huge force for effecting the conquest of this Khanate: It consisted of 53 Companys of Infantry, 25 sotnias of Cossacks, 54 guns, 6 mortars, 2 mitrailleurs, 5 rocket divisions, 19,200 camels, with a complement of about 14,000 men.⁷¹

At the approach of the Russian troops, the Khan of Khiva fled and the Chief inhabitants of the city capitulated before Kaufmann. The city was occupied. On August 24, 1873 a Treaty of Peace, which had been first of all approved by the Emperor, was made with Khiva. The Khanate was reduced to a state of complete vassaldom. The delta and right bank of the Oxus were ceded to Russia. The Oxus was closed to all save Russian and Khivan vessels. Russian merchants were allowed perfect freedom of commerce in the Khanate, with

70. *Ibid.*, pp. 254-255. See also Tripathi, G.P., *Indo-Afghan Relations, 1882-1907*, 1973, p. 30.

71. Burnaby, Fred, p. 255.

liberty to purchase and hold property. A Russian fortress was to be built four miles south of Shurahan. And a war indemnity of 2,200,000 roubles was imposed upon the Khivan sovereign.⁷²

The object of the expedition was obtained. And now all there remained to do was to fulfil the promise of the Emperor given to the English government by Count Schouvaloff. This, however, was not done; there had been a misunderstanding, it was said, and the construction of Russian fort was at once commenced on Khivan territory.⁷³

There had occurred absolutely no unforeseen developments either during the prosecution of the campaign against the Khivans or when their country was occupied, which could possibly have prevented the Russians from redeeming their pledge to the British. Under the circumstances, it appears that they had only made this commitment to ward off a possible opposition from the quarter of the British to the execution of their aggressive designs on the hapless Khanate.

Be that as it may, in 1875, as a result of the surrender of Khiva, and possibly under the instigation of Yakub Beg of Kashgar,⁷⁴ a rebellion broke out in Khokand under the leadership of Nasiruddin, the son of the ruler, Khudayar Khan. Khudayar Khan, unable to face the situation, bolted and took refuge in Russian Turkistan.⁷⁵ Thereupon General Von Kaufmann felt obliged to proceed against Khokand with troops. He defeated the rebels, took possession of the Khokand city and appointed Nasiruddin himself to the Chiefship. The latter offered to live in peace with Russia. But meanwhile a religious war was proclaimed against Russia by the people of Khokand.⁷⁶

72. GOI, Fgn, Sec, June 1882, Nos. 53-55; Burnaby, Fred, pp. 255-258.

73. Burnaby, Fred, p. 258.

74. From General Von Kaufmann, Go-Ge of Russian Turkistan and C-in-C, to the Amir of Afghanistan, October 27, 1875, GOI, Fgn, Sec, March 1876, Nos. 79-88; Prasad Bisheshwar, *The Foundation of India's Foreign Policy 1860-1882*, 1967, p. 20.

75. General Von Kaufmann to the Amir of Afghanistan, October 27, 1875, GOI, Fgn, Sec, March 1876, Nos. 79-88; Prasad Bisheshwar, *The Foundation of India's Foreign Policy 1860-1882*, 1967, p. 20.

76. General Von Kaufmann to the Amir of Afghanistan, October 27, 1875, GOI, Fgn, Sec, March 1876, Nos. 79-88; Prasad Bisheshwar, *The Foundation of India's Foreign Policy 1860-1882*, 1967, p. 20.

Kaufmann quelled the disturbances and annexed Khokand to his country⁷⁷ on March 2, 1876,⁷⁸ which was given the name of Province of Ferghana.⁷⁹

From all the four corners, thus, Russian territory and political influence developed so as to envelop the whole of Central Asia. Russian territory, directly or indirectly, was contiguous with the Oxus and touched the boundaries of Afghanistan,⁸⁰ which state at this time was leaning to Russia rather than to England,⁸¹ but for the vassal state of Bokhara which was the immediate neighbour of the Afghan state. Russia by her vantage position in Central Asia was thus capable of menacing the security of the outer defences of India,⁸² which eventuality could be reasonably feared in view of Russia's invasion-schemes of the country in the past. No wonder people in Britain were worried.⁸³

(B) Forsythe Missions and a Disturbing Discovery

In 1870 the government of India had sent Douglas Forsythe on a commercial mission to Kashgar. Lord Mayo took the opportunity of this mission to organize a combined assault by native explorers on the unknown lands to the west of Kashgar including Dardistan. Hyder Shash, one of them, successfully penetrated into Swat, Dir and Chitral, and made a rapid survey across the Nuksan and Dora Passes. At the same time one Ibrahim Khan traversed the Pamirs via Sarikol to Yarkand after crossing over from Gilgit and Yasin.⁸⁴

Forsythe was sent a second time in 1873. The information that his second mission brought was simply alarming. It was found that the principal Passes of the great range separating Chitral and Yasin from the valley of the Oxus were:—

77. Earl of Dunmore, *The Pamirs*, 1894, p. 317.

78. Prasad Bisheshwar, *The Foundation of India's Foreign Policy 1860-1882*, hereafter quoted as Prasad Bisheshwar, 1967, p. 21.

79. Earl of Dunmore, *The Pamirs*, 1894, p. 317.

80. Prasad Bisheshwar p. 22.

81. From Government of India to Viscount Granbrook, No. 160, July 7, 1879, GOI, Fgn, Sec, July 1879, No. 185.

82. Prasad Bisheshwar, p. 22.

83. Alder, G. J., p. 2.

84. Chakravarti, P.C., *The Evolution of India's Northern Borders*, 1971, p. 133, Alder, G.J., p. 107.

- (a) The Baroghil, and
- (b) The Karambar or Ishkaman.

The first led from Sarhad in Wakhan to Chitral and the second to Yasin and the Gilgit valley. Both of them were said to be easy, to have been actually traversed by artillery and that the possession of the second would practically command the first Pass.⁸⁵

To quote Lieutenant-Colonel T.E. Gordon, one of the members of the second Forsythe mission, "Both the Baroghil and Ishkaman have had guns taken over them within the last few years. By the former, the British frontier can be reached in thirteen marches via the Mastuj, Chitral and Panjkora valleys. By the latter, Torbela on the Indus is reached in the same time via Gilgit, Chilas and the Indus valley. Mir Futteh Ali Shah of Wakhan made special mention of the latter as the best and the nearest road to India".

Again: "A glance at the map will show that Ishkaman in Yasin, with the valley of the Oxus before it, is a point of the greatest strategical importance, checking advance from the direction of the Pamirs, holding the Baroghil Pass, commanding Chitral and the tribes between that and the northern side of the Peshawar valley, threatening Jallalabad (240 miles), Kabul (315 miles), Balkh (390 miles), and the Oxus line of communication and even menacing the Merv line".⁸⁶

"So long as the mistaken idea was held", reported Douglas Forsythe himself, "that the Pamir was really the roof of the world and quite unpassable for troops, it mattered little how far Kashmir penetrated in that direction or who held the petty principalities on the Hindukush. But as the mists of ignorance are gradually being dissipated, we are brought face to face with facts and are compelled to acknowledge danger from a quarter whence we have a right to expect loyal assistance". "I would suggest", he continued, "that a different policy than that hitherto pursued has become a necessity by the march of events I would begin by establishing an Agent at Gilgit;

85. Confdl Report Yarkand Mission by Sri Douglas Forsythe, GOI, Fgn, Sec, August 1875, Nos. 68-81.

86. *Ibid.*

he would be able to gain correct information of countries which at present are a sealed book to us, and he would be able to communicate with Wakhan".⁸⁷

(C) The Biddulph Mission

These new geographical discoveries were sufficient to give rise to a great ferment among the British circles and Forsythe's suggestion deserved serious consideration. But before considering steps on the lines suggested by him, the government of India wanted more intelligence on the subject. They, therefore, sent⁸⁸, in 1875⁸⁹, another mission under Captain John Biddulph to bring further intelligence about the Ishkaman Pass. Biddulph visited Gilgit, Hunza, and a part of Yasin⁹⁰; and studied Passes across the Hindukush from the north and then returned to study their southern exits.⁹¹ And on his return submitted a report which shook the government yet further.

He reported that the most important strategical point of Russian frontier was Osh in Khokand, the whole of which country could be considered, for all practical purposes, as Russian territory. A force assembled at Osh for offensive purposes with all equipments could rapidly advance by the Pamir roads to within a few miles of Sarhad. Not only was no road-making for the passage of field artillery necessary, but along the whole distance there was an unlimited quantity of the finest pastures in the world.

Arrived within 30 miles of Sarhad, Biddulph continued, roadmaking for guns did become necessary, but a strong advance guard, supported by mountain trained batteries, could effectively secure the work from interruption, and the scanty poorly armed population of Wakhan could offer no opposition worth mentioning. From Sarhad to the top of either of the Passes (Ishkaman and Baroghil) not above one mile and a half of road needed preparing for the passage of fields guns, and the

87. *Ibid.*

88. *Ibid.*

89. Preface to John Buddulph's Book, *The Tribes of the Hindukush*, 1880.

90. *Ibid.*

91. Chakravarti, P.C., *The Evolution of India's Northern Borders*, 1971, p. 134.

invader could find the choice of several routes open to him. By the Baroghil Pass he could follow the course of the Mastuj stream to Chitral, whence he could threaten both Jallalabad and Peshawar; or, crossing by the Ishkaman Pass, he could reach Gilgit in three marches, and from there could threaten the Punjab either by Kashmir or the Torbela route. This latter could in all probability offer the greatest physical obstacles; but the certain co-operation of the disaffected people of Swat could offer counter-balancing advantages, while both the routes by the Ishkaman Pass had the advantage of turning the Indus line of defence.

It was probable, as Biddulph held further, that the roads from the passes to the plains of India needed some preparation before bodies of troops could be brought by any of them, but this could tell as much against the defending forces as against the invader. None of them presented any great natural obstacles, and once in possession of the Passes, a powerful enemy could be able to take a strong initiative.⁹²

(D) Reappraisal of the Frontier Policy

On the basis of the expansionist policy adopted by Russia in Central Asia and on the basis of the startling intelligence reports of Douglas Forsythe and Biddulph the government of India had to commence an immediate reappraisal of the entire frontier policy, which inevitably involved a reconsideration of its relations with Kashmir. Direct annexation of the tribal territories like Chitral, Yasin, Hunza, Nagar, on the Kashmir frontier was out of question, partly for the British were not prepared to risk involvement in the sensitive outposts to the Russian boundaries and partly for the reluctance to undertake major military commitments on such a remote frontier. The only other course that looked feasible was to assume greater control over the State of Jammu and Kashmir, and at the same time authorise and encourage the Dogras to extend their authority over these frontier territories and secure the control of the Ishkaman Pass. This would secure the British "a vicarious but virtual" control over the tribal territories

⁹². GOI, Fgn, Sec, August 1875, Nos. 68-81.

without any major commitments of men and material and also push the British outposts nearer Afghanistan over which the British had now begun to tighten control. The proposal was, however, subject to the condition that the Maharaja accepted the appointment of a British political officer at Gilgit to report directly to the government of India the developments on the border.⁹³

(E) The Madhopore Arrangement

The above plan was mooted by Lord Lytton with Maharaja Ranbir Singh in two successive interviews held at Madhopore on the 17th and 18th of November, 1876.

At the first meeting the Governor-General told the Maharaja that the rapid march of events in Central Asia had made it necessary for the government of India to take certain measures to ensure the peace and security of the Indian borders. He expressed his anxiety in regard to the Kashmir frontier and observed that the country beyond the borders of Kashmir State was inhabited by a rude and barbarous people who owed allegiance to various Chiefs in no respect more advanced than the populations over whom they exercised suzerainty, and stated that it was essential that such States as Chitral and Yasin should come under the control of a friend and ally of British government, like the Maharaja, rather than be absorbed, in the course of events by powers inimical to Kashmir. This became the more necessary from there being certain Passes through the mountain range bounding these territories on the north, which Passes, it was believed, were more or less practicable, or could be made practicable, for the passage of troops.

On being asked by the Governor-General as to the best means of achieving those objects, the Maharaja replied that there were three ways to accomplish them, i.e: (1) to take advantage of the internal dissensions which so frequently occurred in those countries and use the opportunity so offered according as circumstances might arise, for annexing the States; or (2) to endeavour by negotiations to obtain political control over those States; (3) to reduce the country by force of arms.

93. GOI, Fgn, Sec, July 1877, Nos. 34-60B; Also Gadru, S.N, *Kashmir Papers ; British Intervention in Kashmir*, 1973, pp. 20-21.

The Maharaja expressed his Willingness to adopt either of these courses if the government of India desired it.

To the Governor-General the second course of peaceful negotiations was the best and most effectual means of bringing Chitral and Yasin under the control of Kashmir. He expressed his readiness to aid such negotiations by any means in his power and gave an assurance that in the event of the Maharaja's action ever involving him in military operations (which was not very probably), the British government would be prepared to give him countenance and material assistance,

The Maharaja agreed with the Governor-General and showed his willingness to enter at once into negotiations with the rulers of Chitral and Yasin. But he was loth to do this unless the Governor-General gave him a written authority to do so. For he feared that, without any written authority, evil-disposed persons would have the power of accusing him of entering into relations with foreign States for his own ends.

The Viceroy promised to furnish the Maharaja with the required authority in such form as might be most satisfactory to His Highness, and, in order to convince him of the sincere desire of the government of India to see his State prosperous and his frontier well-protected, he further offered the Maharaja a gift of 5000 stand of rifles, either Snider or Enfield, for his army. This made the Maharaja rather jubilant.

Thus preparing the ground, the Governor-General made a proposal to station a British officer at Gilgit for the further security of the frontier and the transmission of regular and reliable information. To this proposal, however, the Maharaja reacted with a caution. He displayed his readiness to agree to the appointment of an officer at Gilgit should circumstances ever demanded such a measure, but in the meantime he preferred to construct a telegraph line to Gilgit so that the government of India might obtain immediate and constant information regarding the frontier. But when the Governor-General insisted on his original proposal, the Maharaja said that as the idea of a British Officer at Gilgit was entirely new to him and unexpected, he should be suffered time to weigh fully the arguments for and against the measure. Lord Lytton

acceded to this request of the Maharaja and with this the first meeting between the two terminated.

The following day, November 18th, the Maharaja conveyed his perfect willingness to meet the wishes of the Governor-General in regard to the Gilgit appointment without requiring him to "Gild the pill" any further. He, however, asked for leave to address the government of India in writing concerning certain assurances which he wished to obtain in connection with the proposed measure. Lord Lytton agreed to it.

Consequently, the Maharaja addressed him a letter on November 26, 1876, requesting him to grant him a 'Sanad' or a title deed containing the following assurances :—

1. That no interference would ever be made in any affair affecting trade or administration or any matter regarding the subjects, officials and servants of the State.

2. That the government of India would always respect the conditions of the Maharaja's 'Sanad', the proclamation by Her Majesty and the established usages and customs in forces within the State territories.

3. That the duties of the officer to be appointed would be specified, so that the Maharaja might have a clear idea of the business the officer would have to do.

4. That rules would be framed defining the power of the officer and the manner in which he would exercise them and the Maharaja would be furnished with a copy of the same before the officer was appointed.

5. That the power of the officer would be confined to matters affecting countries beyond the State territories.

6. That the said officer would never issue any order on the State officials without taking the Maharaja's opinion and consent.

7. That the persons in the employ of, or subordinate to, the said officer would remain subject to the laws of the State.

8. That the appointment of the officer under reference would not be made a precedent.

9. That the consequences of this arrangement would never be made occasions for impairing the integrity and dignity of the State.

10. That the selection of the officer would be made in consultation with the Maharaja.

11. That if any misunderstanding arose between the officer in question and the State officials, any representation that the Maharaja made on the subject would be taken into serious consideration.

12. That false reports by interested persons about the Maharaja's relations with the frontier States or any reckless adventure by the officer in penetrating the frontier would never be made grounds for injuring the Maharaja's reputation.

The Governor-General replied on December 22, 1876. After authorising the Maharaja, as desired by him, to open negotiations with the rulers of Chitral and Yasin to bring them under his control, he alluded to the assurances required by the Maharaja in his letter of the 26th of November, 1876, and stated that he regarded the requests contained therein as in every way reasonable and worthy of consideration. He therefore, with pleasure, conveyed the assurances desired by the Maharaja. He added that the function of the officer stationed at Gilgit would be confined to (1) collecting and furnishing information regarding the frontier and the progress of events beyond it, accompanied by such advice to the Maharaja and to the British government as his military experience might enable him to offer in regard thereto, (2) the organization of any military measures on the border which might have previously received the free assent and full approval of the Maharaja.

The Governor-General assured the Maharaja that in the performance of the above duties, the officer would be instructed to communicate with him no less freely and confidentially than with the British government. And if he failed to carry out strictly the condition of his appointment, he was to be at once recalled. The Governor-General also agreed to avail himself of the Maharaja's advice in the selection of the officer for appointment at Gilgit.

In the end the Governor-General assured the Maharaja that the appointment of a British officer at Gilgit had been proposed by him solely with a view to extending the influence and strengthening the powers of his (of the Maharaja's) government on the frontier, and in no wise to weaken the authority, or

lower the dignity of his rule, which it was the wish as well as the interest of the British government to support and uphold. Nor was the plan intended to form a precedent for enlarging or altering the arrangements that existed then in respect of the position of the Officer on Special Duty at Srinagar.^{94*}

(F) Appointment of Major John Biddulph as British Agent in Gilgit

Major John Biddulph had collected sufficient information and experience during his exploratory mission to the Gilgit frontier. The present arrangement being entered into with the Maharaja was also mainly the result of the recommendations submitted by him. When, therefore, the time for the appointment of the Agent at Gilgit came, the choice naturally fell on him. The Maharaja's concurrence was duly obtained. The title given to the Agent was 'Officer on Special Duty in Gilgit'.

At the time of his appointment Major Biddulph was told of all the terms and conditions of his office as agreed to between the Governor-General and the Maharaja. He was ordered strictly to abide by those terms and conditions. In addition, he was to endeavour, with the co-operation of the Maharaja and his officials, to collect such information as might be obtainable regarding the topography and resources of the localities in his vicinity.

He was also to endeavour, in consultation with the Kashmir authorities, to cultivate friendly relations with the tribes beyond the border in view to bringing them gradually under the control and influence of Kashmir. He could, at his discretion, interdict and prevent British subjects, English, or Native, from proceeding beyond the Kashmir frontier, whenever he deemed such a course desirable in the interests of their personal safety, or on grounds of political expediency.

It was also within the compass of his duties to furnish a weekly diary of intelligence and proceedings, in a given form,

94. GOI, Fgn, Sec, July 1877, Nos. 34-60B.

*. In the year 1852 the government of India had appointed a British officer at Srinagar for supervising the conduct of the European visitors to the State. (P. Michill to H.M. Elliot, February 27, 1852, GOI, Pol, December 14, 1852, Nos. 82-83).

through Major Henderson, the Officer on Special Duty in Kashmir, who was to be the channel of his communications with the government of India. The above arrangements did not, however, prohibit his addressing the Foreign Secretary to the government of India direct on occasions of urgency; but, in such a case, a copy of any communication he might address direct to the government of India, he was required to forward to Major Henderson.

The Secretary of State for India approved the above scheme, and thus the Gilgit Agency saw the light of the day in the year 1877. And Major John Biddulph, late 19th Hussars, to the Bengal Staff Corps, became the first British Agent, or Political Agent, in Gilgit.⁹⁵

95. Officiating Secretary to the Government of India to Captain John Biddulph, No. 2248 P : September 22, 1877, GOI, Fgn and Pol-A, February 1878, Nos. 117-137.

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3

Major Biddulph as British Agent and His Recall in 1881

Major Biddulph arrived in Gilgit in December 1877 as 'Officer on Special Duty'.

The Chaprote Affairs

Soon after his arrival, Biddulph found his attention and time occupied by the affairs of Chaprote. The territory of Chaprote, comprising the villages of Chaprote, Chalt, Budlus, and Bar, occupied an important position between the States of Gilgit, Hunza and Nagar. Great value attached in local estimation to the village of Chaprote itself on account of its reputed impregnability, but the point of real importance was Chalt, where the route to Nagar and Hunza diverged, and the possession of which closed all access from the North by the little known Passes from Sirikol, Wakhan, and the intervening country into Hunza.¹

Under the ancient rulers of Gilgit, Chaprote belonged to that State, and, on the establishment of the Sikh power west of the Indus, was occupied as an outpost, first by the Sikh and later by the Dogra troops. In 1848 or 1849 the garrison at Chaprote was surprised by the people of Hunza and sold into slavery, and the Chaprote territory remained as a possession of Hunza till 1875.

In the winter of 1875 Mir Jaffer Khan of Nagar intrigued with the people of Chaprote, and succeeded in getting them to throw off their allegiance to Hunza and acknowledge obedience

¹1. Biddulph to Henvey, July 25, 1879, No. 149, GOI, Fgn, Sec, October 1879, Nos. 402-405.

to Nagar. His son, Uzar Khan, with a Nagar garrison was placed in Chaprote. Fearing however, his inability to maintain his hold of Chaprote against Hunza, Jaffer Khan applied to the Governor of Gilgit for a garrison of Kashmir troops. The advisability of the step was discussed at Madhopore in November 1876, and the Viceroy sanctioned the occupation, which the Maharaja carried out.²

On his arrival in Gilgit in December 1877, Biddulph found that a garrison of fifty men had been placed in the Chaprote fort, while the important point of Chalt was left in the hands of Nagar. This small garrison was not only isolated and liable to be cut off from Gilgit by Hunza and Nagar at any moment, but it had been placed entirely at the disposal of Uzar Khan, who moved them as he pleased and on one occasion took a number of them with him to Nagar. They were totally dependent for provisions on supplies brought periodically in small quantities from Nagar, so that at any moment pressure could be put upon them to force them to evacuate the fort by withholding their supplies. The result was that the Maharaja had made himself responsible for the safety of Chaprote without reaping any single advantage or being able to make the necessary arrangements for the safety of the district or garrison, which were little better than so many hostages given to the Mir of Nagar.³

In July 1878 Mir Ghazan Khan of Hunza sent a wakil, and made a formal request to the Governor of Gilgit in the presence of Major Biddulph. He allowed that Chaprote belonged by right neither to Hunza nor to Nagar, but to Gilgit, and that its occupation by Nagar could not fail to lead to mischief-making between Hunza and Gilgit. He therefore asked that, to preserve order, the Kashmir government should resume entire possession and make Uzar Khan withdraw. Ghazan Khan promised, on his part, if this arrangement was carried out, that

2. Government of India to SSI, No. 4, Front, January 6, 1892, GOI, Fgn, Front-A, January 1892. Nos. 15-130; Biddulph to Henvey, July 25, 1879, No. 149, GOI, Fgn, Sec, October 1879, Nos. 402-405.

3. Biddulph to Henvey, No. 149, July 25, 1879, GOI, Fgn, Sec, October 1879, Nos. 402-405.

one of his four sons should always reside in Gilgit as a guarantee for his good behaviour.⁴ Biddulph was strongly in favour of this suggestion on the following grounds :—

(a) Jaffer Khan of Nagar was not loyal to Kashmir ; his policy had been to play off Kashmir and Hunza against each other without ever committing himself with either.

(b) Jaffer Khan's style of address had been most insolent both to the Governor of Gilgit and Major Biddulph. He addressed Major Biddulph with hyperbolical titles, such as "The Great Khakan", "Emperor of the Age", etc.

(c) On several occasions, in accordance with instructions received from Jammu, the Governor of Gilgit had addressed requests to Jaffer Khan to surrender three iron-smiths whom he had secretly taken from Kashmir to Nagar in the autumn of 1878 to be employed in making arms and respecting arrangements for strengthening the Chaprote garrison. But he had only made insolent response to them.

(d) Though Ghazan Khan of Hunza was willing to surrender his Chaprote claim to the Maharaja, he was certainly not prepared to allow the territory to remain in the hands of Nagar, and the possibility of again making himself master of it could not fail to be a continual temptation to him while it remained so weakly guarded. In July 1879 Jaffer Khan's eldest son, Muhammad Khan, whose mother was sister to Ghazan Khan, had been installed as virtual ruler of Nagar. Close friendship existed between Ghazan Khan and Muhammad Khan, while between Muhammad Khan and his brothers there was enmity. There was reason to believe that for several months past Ghazan Khan had been setting on foot intrigues to put himself in possession of Chaprote, and it was probable that, before long, some hostile act would be directed against Uzar Khan by either Ghazan Khan or Muhammad Khan, or the two combined.

(e) Jaffer Khan had intrigued with the neighbouring States, and had endeavoured to excite hostile feelings against the Maharaja.

(f) It was the apparent wish of Major Biddulph to see

Chaprote in the firm possession of the Maharaja of Kashmir, with the principal object of guarding him against the danger of a flank attack in case of a problematical advance upon Chitral or Yasin at some future date. And he would like to see Nagar punished for the insolent bearing of its Chief.⁵

The advantages accruing from the occupation of Chaprote were thought to be :—

- (1) to gain command of the road to both Hunza and Nagar and to Ishkaman Pass;
- (2) to prevent combination between Hunza and Nagar; and
- (3) to put a stop to the existing unsatisfactory arrangement, by which 50 troops were in Chaprote at the mercy of Jaffer Khan, on whom they depended even for food.⁶

On July 7, 1879, Henvey, Officer on Special Duty in Kashmir, laid the Chaprote case before the Maharaja and suggested the territory to be directly occupied by him. The Maharaja, however, was loath to accept the proposal, for (1) no reinforcements could be sent from Kashmir if needed on the frontier ; (2) no provisions could be sent at the time because of the prevalence of famine conditions in the Jammu and Kashmir State; (3) direct occupation might involve the State in prolonged hostilities with the tribes ; and (4) Jaffer Khan, as the Maharaja thought, was loyal to Kashmir.

But Major Biddulph was of opinion that the Crops in Gilgit were sufficient, and the Maharaja could take advantage of this to move up the troops from Astore, where the want of food was the greatest. And as the Chaprote project was suggested by Ghazan Khan himself through his wakil, Fuzul Khan, it

5. Biddulph to Henvey, No. 149, July 25, 1879, GOI, Fgn, Sec., October 1879, Nos. 402-405 ;

Government of India to SSI, No. 103, July 15, 1881, GOI, Fgn, Sec-E, August 1884, Nos. 4-19 ; Henvey to A.C. Lyall, July 15, 1879, Confdl, GOI, Fgn, Sec, October 1879, Nos. 267-310; Demi Official letter from Officer on Special Duty in Kashmir, GOI, Fgn, Sec., October 1879, Nos. 402-405.

6. Henvey to A.C. Lyall, July 15, 1879, Confdl, GOI, Fgn, Sec., October 1879, Nos. 267-310.

was not likely that he would combine with Nagar, more especially as his son would be a hostage at Gilgit.⁷

It, however, seems that Henvey had gone beyond his powers by making the Chaprote proposal to the Maharaja. For, when the matter came to the knowledge of the government of India, they took a different line of thought. They were of the view that the Chaprote affair could probably be better managed by the Darbar than through the intervention of the British Agent at Gilgit, and it could certainly not tend to a happy issue, if pushed by the British government, contrary to the wishes and policy of the Maharaja's government. They were further of the opinion that it was not possible for them to give any assistance to the Maharaja in the execution of the Chaprote project suggested by Ghazan Khan of Hunza and supported by Biddulph and Henvey. They, therefore, advised Henvey to inform Major Biddulph to leave the settlement of the Chaprote question in the hands of the Gilgit Governor, merely watching the proceedings and tendering his advice when asked for.⁸

Major Biddulph, however, did not act on this advice and continued to urge the Maharaja to settle the question; and when he failed to induce him to occupy Chaprote, he, in May 1880, suggested that the Chaprote garrison should be increased from 50 to at least 250 men. Two reasons had impelled him to make this proposal. First. Ghazan Khan of Hunza and Muhammad Khan of Nagar who were close friends of each other had by this time come closer together, and some act of overt hostility directed against Chaprote could be expected any day. Secondly, Raja Uzar Khan of Chaprote was at this time anxious to sever his connection with Nagar; and Biddulph thought advantage could be taken of this feeling on his part to place the Chaprote garrison in such a position as to render any attack on it by Hunza and Nagar difficult. This could be done

7. Henvey to A.C. Lyall, December 31, 1878, GOI, Fgn, Sec, January 1879, Nos. 341-343; Henvey to A.C. Lyall, July 15, 1879, Confdl, GOI, Fgn, Sec, October 1879, Nos. 267-310.

8. A.C. Lyall to F. Henvey, No. 2085 E.P., August 8, 1879, GOI, Fgn, Sec, October 1879, Nos. 267-310; SSI to Government of India, No. 35, Sec, September 3, 1880, GOI, Fgn. Sec, December 1880, No. 361.

by increasing the garrison, feeding them with supplies from Gilgit, improving the road between Nomal and Chaprote, and placing a force in Chalt.⁹

But the Maharaja again had his objections. He considered that placing a force in Chalt was objectionable on two grounds. First, because the people residing in this village were subjects of the Chief of Nagar, and it was not advisable to station troops where such people dwelt, as they could intrigue any time and cause some disaster. Secondly, it was not thought wise to disperse troops in different places in view of the past experience. If to reinforce such detachments of troops the strength of the force in Gilgit were increased, it would have necessitated consumption of a greater quantity of provisions than at that time, and no stores would have been left to meet any exigency in the event of any hostility breaking out. And as it is clear that the force to be stationed in Chaprote was to be strong enough to suppress disturbances and repel any attack, even if Uzar Khan, or the people of Chaprote, were to join any intrigue against the place, it was certainly, in the opinion of the Maharaja, preferable to strengthen the garrison in Chaprote by holding out hopes to, and without arousing any suspicion in, Uzar Khan and the people of Chaprote and Chalt. The Maharaja, in fact desired to maintain peace on the frontier, and to arrange everything in such a manner as would not create any disturbance.¹⁰

But he had to hearken to Biddulph's advice and increase the Chaprote garrison to two hundred and fifty men. This he did about June 1880,¹¹ for by this time reports of an intended attack upon Chaprote by Hunza and Nagar had been in the air.¹² The increase was effected without any difficulty and did not lead to any disturbance in the area in question.¹³

9. Biddulph to Diwan Anant Ram, May 4, 1880, GOI, Fgn, Sec, August 1880, Nos. 117-166.

10. F. Henvey to A.C. Lyall, May 17, 1880, GOI, Fgn, Sec, August 1880, Nos. 117-166.

11. Memo of a conversation on the Chaprote affair, dated June 18, 1880, GOI, Fgn, Sec, August 1880, Nos. 117-166.

12. Gilgit Diary No. 107 of April 27, 1880, GOI, Fgn. Sec, December 1880, Nos. 117-166.

13. SSI to Government of India, No. 35 (Sec), September 3, 1880, GOI, Fgn, Sec, December 1880, No. 361.

Kashmir-Chitral Treaty of 1878

The commencement of friendly relations between Chitral and Kashmir, after years of mutual hostility,¹⁴ dates from 1877, when Aman-ul-Mulk, the then ruler of Chitral, being hard-pressed by the Amir of Afghanistan, made an offer of submission to, and Treaty of friendship with, the Maharaja of Kashmir.¹⁵ The Maharaja, thinking that Aman-ul-Mulk was sincere in his offer of allegiance, proposed, with the approval of the government of India, a Treaty of friendship with him.

Under this Treaty, Aman-ul-Mulk, in return for an annual subsidy of rupees 12,000, Srinagar coinage, was to engage himself to always sincerely endeavour to obey and execute the orders of His Highness, and to overtly and covertly consider His Highness' well-wishers and friends as his friends, and the enemies of his government as his enemies. He was also to present the following "Nazarana" or tribute to the Maharaja annually as an acknowledgement of his paramount power :—

Three horses,
Five hawks,
Five Tazi dogs (hounds),

One confidential agent of the Maharaja was always to reside in Chitral and another at Yasin* and due attention and consideration was to be paid to them.

In the like manner a confidential agent of Aman-ul-Mulk was to reside at the Maharaja's Darbar, and another on the part of the ruler of Yasin was to remain at Gilgit for the purpose of carrying out the Maharaja's orders.

And if one of Aman-ul-Mulk's sons were appointed in the place of one of the agents (above-mentioned), the Maharaja's government was to assign him an extra allowance.

At the end of 1877 this draft Treaty was sent to Aman with

14. GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, July 1895, Nos. 946-998.

15. Aman-ul-Mulk to Maharaja, GOI, Fgn. Sec, July 1877, Nos. 34-60B; Bhai Ganga Singh to Maharaja, GOI, Fgn, Sec, July 1877, Nos. 34-60B.

*. For a long time before our period of study commences, Yasin was considered to be only a part of the Chitral State. Its ruler used to be a nominee or the Mehtar of Chitral, though it is doubtful whether the Mehtar always had an effective control over him.

the first instalment of the subsidy.¹⁶ Aman, however, took more than a year in considering the matter and only in January 1879 came his agent, Bahadur Khan, to Jammu with the Treaty. The document this agent brought was in the same terms as sent by the Maharaja except that the number of horses, hawks and hounds was reduced respectively by one, three and three.¹⁷ Aman had not even bothered to sign it, but had simply stated that it had his approval.¹⁸

Despite this paper commitment, Aman-ul-Mulk did his best to minimize the significance of his relations with Kashmir and to maintain as close ties as possible with Kabul. This made things very difficult for Biddulph at Gilgit, especially as Indo-Afghan relations in 1878 were deteriorating towards war. Matters eventually reached such a pitch that Biddulph even doubted whether his projected visit to Chitral in 1878 would serve any purpose at all.¹⁹ He left Gilgit on October 7,²⁰ and reached Yasin on 16.²¹ On 29th the final ultimatum was despatched to Kabul. With War about to break out between India and Afghanistan it was impossible to guess which way Aman-ul-Mulk would jump.²²

Fortunately Biddulph received a moderately friendly welcome in Yasin and Chitral. Both rulers, however, were loud in their contempt of the Kashmir connection. Pahlwan Bahadur of Yasin claimed that he had met with 'nothing but bad treatment and bad faith from Kashmir ; that in consequence he had decided on sending no more vakils to Jammu'. Aman-ul-Mulk was even more contemptuous of the Kashmir subsidy—'I can take a few Kaffir women and sell them for as much', he said—and was clearly disappointed that Biddulph had brought with him nothing more than platitudes about the need for friendship with

16. GOI, Fgn, Sec, November 1877, Nos. 60-79.

17. Henvey to Lyall, January 7, 1879, GOI, Fgn, Sec, October 1879, Nos. 315-318.

18. Alder, G.J., p. 122.

19. Memo by Biddulph on the present condition of Affairs in Gilgit, GOI, Fgn, Sec, July 1881, Nos. 314-399; Alder, G.J., p. 122.

20. Henvey to Lyall, January 11, 1879, GOI, Fgn, October 1879, Nos. 267-310.

21. Alder, G.J., p. 122.

22. From Government of India to SSI, No. 160, July 7, 1879, GOI, Fgn, Sec, July 1879, No. 185 ; Alder, G.J., p. 122.

Kashmir. A few days after Biddulph left,²³ despite a very clear warning against it²⁴, Aman made fresh overtures to Kabul for a marriage alliance.²⁵

In fact, Aman-ul-Mulk, at this time, was trimming between Kabul and Kashmir.²⁶ Henvey aptly says, "He (Aman-ul-Mulk) is afraid of every one all around and he is anxious for money. He likes the Maharaja's money and shows no desire to cast aside the Maharaja. He fears Kabul, and desires to maintain friendly relations with the Amir. In other words, he would take money and gifts from every quarter, keep himself perfectly free, give no effectual guarantees, and would neither be the friend of the British, nor the friend of the Amir, but the friend of whichever is the strongest."²⁷

And so it proved to be. For, during the Anglo-Afghan War the conduct of Aman "varied weekly, according to its progress and the false rumours of British reverses that reached Chitral from time to time". But by April 1879, when the issue was no longer in doubt, he was being described as the 'devoted ally' of Kashmir.²⁸

From the above account it appears that the Maharaja of Kashmir and the British Agent at Gilgit had failed to be-friend the Chitral and Yasin rulers and secure an effective control over their countries.

The Gilgit Disturbances of 1880

That Major Biddulph and the Maharaja of Kashmir had failed to develop friendship not only with Chitral and Yasin but with other Chiefs on the Gilgit frontier, is proved by the Gilgit disturbances that occurred on the frontier in the autumn of 1880. The causes of these disturbances are obscure. It is sufficient to record that, after his attempts at the recovery of Chaprote ended in a fiasco, Ghazan Khan of Hunza made

23. Memo by Major Biddulph on the present condition of affairs in Gilgit, GOI, Fgn, Sec, July 1881, Nos. 314-399; Alder G.J, p. 122.

24. GOI, Fgn, Sec, October 1879, Nos. 267-310; Alder, G.J., p. 122.

25. GOI, Fgn, Sec, July 1881, Nos. 314-399.

26. Government of India to SSI, No. 49, February 28, 1879, GOI, Fgn-Sec, March 1879, Nos. 35-37.

27. F. Henvey to A.C. Lyall, January 11, 1879, GOI, Fgn, Sec, October 1879, Nos. 267-310.

28. GOI, Fgn, Sec, July 1881, Nos. 314-399; Alder, G.J., p. 123.

great efforts to get up a combination of tribes to encompass this objective of his. For this purpose he promised to give a daughter in marriage to Pahlwan Bahadur of Yasin, and another to Alif Beg of Sirikol, and distributed presents in Nagar in hopes of obtaining help from thence.

And the desired combination did not fail to come into being, for by March 1878 Pahlwan Bahadur, Ghazan Khan, the men of Darel and Tangir, and the ruler of Chitral became one.²⁹

The disturbances occurred in October 1880, in which month Pahlwan Bahadur rose in rebellion against the Gilgit authorities. But before making the projected attack he, in order to throw the officers at Gilgit off their guard, deputed, in accordance with the ancient custom, his agent with Nazarana for presentation to the Maharaja's officers at Gilgit and, to lull suspicion, made every show of loyalty. Ghazan Khan of Hunza did so too. While Pahlwan's agent was still in Gilgit, Raja Afiat Khan, State Commander of the Gakuch* fort, and Raja Akbar Khan, the Ra of Punial, arrived at Gilgit on State business. Pahlwan taking advantage of their absence from their respective charges, invaded Punial on October 28 and captured the fort of Gakuch by surprise.³⁰

It is said that the Yasin force, during the night of October 27, crept up close to the fort and concealed themselves in a garden close by. At daylight Pir Syud Shah, who had lived in Gakuch for four years and was allowed to return to Yasin three weeks before, came to the gate and called out that he had come from Yasin to give information that a Yasin force was approaching, and that no time

29. Gilgit Diaries Nos. 11 and 12, of 28 February and 7 March, respectively GOI, Fgn, Sec, July 1878, Nos. 53-94; Government of India to SSI, No. 241, December 1880, GOI, Fgn, Sec, December, 1880, Nos. 83-153.

* In Punial.

30. Biddulph to Henvey, October 29, 1880, GOI, Fgn, Sec, December 1880, Nos. 83-153; Gilgit Diary No. 132, GOI, Fgn, Sec, December 1880, Nos. 53-82; Kak, R.C., *A Note on the Nature of the Relationship between the Jammu and Kashmir State and the Chiefships and Territories Comprised in the Gilgit Political Agency*, hereafter quoted as Kak, R.C., 1939, p. 8. R.C. Kak was the Prime Minister of Maharaja Hari Singh of Jammu and Kashmir, who ruled the State from 1925 to 1948. The above book of R.C. Kak is based on primary records.

should be lost in taking the necessary defensive measures. The gate was flung open, and as the men issued out the men in ambush rushed on them, while the Pir held the gate open and the fort was taken at once. No men were killed, the Pir having made it a condition that the lives of his disciples should be spared. The invaders swept on, the village forts of Bubar, Goorj, and Sinjal all opening their gates at the command of their Pir. Had the rush continued, Cher Kila* also would almost certainly have been surprised. It was thought better though to wait till nightfall. The place was then invested. The garrison, according to the accounts which Biddulph collected from the fort, consisted of 132 Kashmiri sepoy and 100 Punialis. The water supply was cut off, so they could only draw water from the river at night. They had lots of provisions and a fair amount of ammunition, the fort was strong and virtually impregnable. The principal fear, however, was lest the Punialis should betray the garrison to the Pir. 23499

Pahlwan had only 750 men with him, of those fifty belonged to Hunza under its Wazir's son.³¹ The Darelis were on their way to join him at Sinjal which would bring up his numbers to 900 or 1,000, but Darelis were not thought much of as fighting men. Aman-ul-Mulk of Chitral had held back, but was said to have promised to join on the fall of Cher Kila.

A Darbar officer, Adjutant Bishna, who commanded the fort at Cher, was said to have made full preparations to give battle. Raja Afiat Khan and Akbar Khan returning from Gilgit found the enemy in occupation of their country and at once sent intelligence to the State officers at Gilgit through one Faulad Bahadur, so that arrangements might be made for the expulsion of the hostile forces from their country and they might be reinstated in their respective positions.³²

It must, however, be mentioned that the Punial disturbance

* Cher Kila means the rock fort. This fort was situated in the capital of Punial.

31. Biddulph to Henvey, November 1, 1880, GOI, Fgn, Sec, December 1880, Nos. 83-153; Gilgit Diary No. 132, GOI, Fgn, Sec, December 1880, Nos. 53-82.

32. Biddulph to Henvey, November 1, 1880, GOI, Fgn, Sec, December 1880, Nos. 83-153; Kak, R.C., p. 8.

was not completely unanticipated. Sixty men were despatched from Gilgit on October 27, and 100 men on 28, to reinforce Cher Kila, but both parties failed to reach the place before it was invested, and returned. It was impossible to despatch reinforcements earlier, as they did not arrive from Kashmir till 25, and the number of men in Gilgit previous to that date was barely sufficient to hold the fort. Reinforcements were also despatched to Chaprote on 27.

Fears were at first entertained for the safety of Gilgit as it was not known whether the neighbouring tribes had joined the Chiefs of Hunza and Yasin or not. Orders were sent to Astore to hurry up the troops, which should have reached Gilgit in the ordinary course of relief two months ago, but with the exception of forty men brought in on the 2nd of November by General Hooshiara Singh, none arrived before the 16th. One Sirdar, who was at Astore on the 3rd of November, though repeatedly summoned to bring 150 men with him, whose destined post was at Gilgit, disregarded the urgency of the order and took thirteen days to accomplish a march of seventy-two miles.³³

The same slackness was shown by the reinforcements arriving from Iskardu. An officer commanding a detachment of eighty men armed with Enfield rifles, after halting for four days at Haramosh, wrote to ask for orders, though repeatedly summoned to hasten on.

From this attitude of the Kashmir officials it can be safely inferred that they were either not true to their salt, or they were reluctant to co-operate with Major Biddulph in meeting the situation.

After the return of the detachments which had failed to reach Cher Kila, the garrison in Gilgit consisted of thirty-nine officers, 775 rank and file, and fifty-six camp followers who were all reported to be efficient. It was not till several days later that Biddulph discovered that 10 per cent of the whole

33. Gilgit Diary No. 132, GOI, Fgn, Sec, December 1880, Nos. 53-82; Biddulph to Henvey, October 29, 1880, GOI, Fgn, Sec, December 1880, Nos. 83-153.

were sick, and among the rest were a large number of boys, old men, and recruits of two or three months' service only.³⁴

On the 3rd of November, 480 men started from Gilgit to relieve Cher Kila. A number of armed Gilgitis under the wazir of Gilgit, Gholam Hyder, were sent in advance to seize and hold a difficult passage in the road near Sharot. This was done, but on the arrival of the main force within four miles of the place, intelligence was received that the wazir, with all the small officials, had gone over to the enemy. Under the circumstances of all plans being known to the Yasinis, and of the disaffection of the Gilgitis, it was considered necessary to return at once to secure the fort at Gilgit, which had been dangerously denuded of troops, and to save the force from being intercepted by mountain paths. A retreat was at once ordered, and after a fatiguing march the fort was regained without loss. Enquiry showed that there was reason to expect a general attack from all the tribes around.³⁵

Under the circumstances, Biddulph felt it necessary to assume the entire command of the whole force in Gilgit, to which the Maharaja's officials cheerfully agreed.

The next ten days were employed in strengthening defences, some of which were in a very bad state, taking precautions against possible treachery on the part of the people of the country, distributing the troops to different posts and duties, and getting in supplies, while awaiting reinforcements from Iskardu and Kashmir.

On the other hand, scouting parties of Yasinis, mixed with people of the country who had joined them, were very active on all the roads, and a bridge within 300 yards of the fort was destroyed, as also another bridge at an important point within five miles of Gilgit.

Sayyids were despatched to the Indus valley tribes to rouse them to a holy war. A letter, written in the name of Pahlwan and Wazir Gholam Hyder, addressed to all the Mussalmans of

34. *Ibid.*

35. Biddulph to Henvey, November 1, 1880, GOI, Fgn, Sec, December 1880, Nos. 83-153; Gilgit Diary No. 132, GOI, Fgn, Sec, December 1880, Nos. 53-82.

Shinaki, was intercepted near Boonji. In it they were urged to seize Boonji and Ramghat, and so cut the communication between Gilgit and Kashmir. Intelligence was received that the people of Chilas, Herbund, etc; were preparing to do as demanded.³⁶

It became known from men who were prisoners in Pahlwan's hands that a perfect knowledge existed in his camp of everything that went on in Gilgit, down to the minutest details; and he was even better acquainted than the Gilgit authorities were, with the movements of troops in the Gilgit direction from Kashmir. Even the names of the principal officers then on the way up were known.³⁷ This shows that the intelligence system of Pahlwan Bahadur's was abysmally strong, while that of the Gilgit authorities was miserably weak. And the knowledge about the names of the Dogra officers going to Gilgit must have been brought by spies from Bandipur travelling by the Lolab valley and Chilas.

On the 6th of November Biddulph despatched Niamut Khan, a Chitrali wakil residing in Gilgit, with letters to Aman-ul-Mulk, calling on him to put in force his often expressed promise of punishing Pahlwan Bahadur in case of misbehaviour on his part; on the 8th, Shah Murad, the wazir of Nagar, arrived in Gilgit with fifty men to give assurance of Jaffer Khan's loyalty, and offering service. Biddulph dismissed the man with letters to Jaffer Khan, thanking him for his assistance, which, he said, was not required.³⁸

The Yasin and Hunza vakils, who were in Gilgit at the time of the outbreak, were detained in confinement. It had become known that they were cognisant of the coming attack, and were sent purposely to lull suspicion, trusting to be able to make their escape in the first confusion.

In the meanwhile, as soon as the news of the siege of Cher Kila by Pahlwan's force had reached Gilgit, the State officers in command in consultation with Major Biddulph decided that the troops marching from Kashmir, which were

36. *Ibid.*

37. Gilgit Diary No. 132, GOI, Fgn, Sec, December 1880, Nos. 53-82.

38. *Ibid.*

on their way to Gilgit, be instructed telegraphically to make forced marches and reach the disturbed area as soon as possible. A report of the insurrection was also submitted to the Maharaja. All the troops in the Gilgit area including those stationed at Boonji under General Hooshiara Singh and Bakhshi Mulraj and the Iskardu garrison were concentrated at Gilgit. General Shankar Singh was despatched by the Maharaja from Kashmir to Gilgit with two Battalions of troops and arms and ammunition. Thus a force of nearly five thousand troops mustered at Gilgit to deal with the rebellion.³⁹

The troops, however, had not actually to march for the relief of Cher Kila. For, when they were about to march to achieve this object, Mehtar Aman-ul-Mulk of Chitral despatched a contingent under the command of his eldest son, Sardar Nizam-ul-Mulk, to Yasin to arrest Pahlwan who was his nephew and son-in-law. He gave directions that as soon as Pahlwan was arrested, he should be sent in chains to the officers of the Maharaja. He further made a separate submission to the Maharaja sending it by a messenger via Peshawar.

As per this communication the Mehtar informed the Maharaja of the steps he had taken, and expressed the hope that Pahlwan would be caught and presented to him (the Maharaja) soon. He also told the Maharaja that, as the troops he had sent to Yasin were strong enough to subdue the insurrection, there was no need for His Highness' troops to undertake the trouble of marching to Yasin. Besides, the presence of a victorious army like the Maharaja's could, in the opinion of the Mehtar, create a commotion in the district of Yasin. He, therefore, requested the Maharaja to countermand the march of troops into Yasin so that the "ill-advised act of one disaffected person may not result in dire consequences for the entire body of Your Highness' subjects in Yasin."⁴⁰

On Nizam-ul-Mulk's arrival in Yasin, Pahlwan fled to

39. Gilgit Diary No. 132, GOI, Fgn, Sec, December 1880, Nos. 53-82; Letter from Diwan Anant Ram, dated November 4, 1880, GOI, Fgn, Sec, December 1880, Nos. 83-153; Kak, R.C., p. 9.

40. Kak, R.C., p. 10.

Chitral. Mehtar Aman-ul-Mulk, by reason of his being Pahlwan's father-in-law, did not slay him, but placed him, under custody for some time. Fearing, however, that by giving refuge to the rebel—though his own son-in-law—he might give umbrage to the Maharaja, he expelled Pahlwan, with his family, from Chitral to Afghanistan.⁴¹ Sardar Nizam-ul-Mulk thereupon sent a Nazarana consisting of some horses and a pair of hawks to the Maharaja's officers at Gilgit for submission to him. He also sent a letter to the commandant at Gilgit requesting for the grant of an interview. At this interview which took place at Gakuch, Nizam-ul-Mulk said:—"Pahlwan has suffered the consequences of his misdeeds. We have always been loyal and obedient to His Highness and our only desire has been to render to him such service as would ensure the continuity of his favour to us and our children. As regards the disposal of Yasin, any directions which His Highness may be pleased to issue are acceptable to us."

Nizam-ul-Mulk was dismissed with a suitable 'Khillat' and reward for his services by the Maharaja's officers.⁴² Subsequently, the Maharaja permitted Aman-ul-Mulk to partition and dispose of Yasin as under:—

1. Yasin proper to be placed under Mir Aman, brother to Gaur Aman and an uncle of Pahlwan.
2. Mastuj to be placed under Afzul-ul-Mulk, a son of Mehtar Aman-ul-Mulk.
3. Ghizar to be placed under Mohammed Wali, son of Mir Wali.

The Mehtar stipulated that Pahlwan would not be restored to any part of the territories which he by his misconduct had justly forfeited. He also undertook to guarantee that his nominees appointed to administer the above three parts of Yasin would behave properly, and would remit annual Nazaranas to the Maharaja. The Maharaja proposed that a part of the subsidy that was to be paid to Aman-ul-Mulk would now directly be paid to the actual rulers of the Yasin

41. GOI, Fgn, Sec, March 1882, Nos. 97-158; Kak, R.C, p. 10.

42. Gilgit Diary No. 133, GOI, Fgn, Sec, December 1880, Nos. 53-82; Kak, R.C, p. 10.

territories.⁴³ These arrangements proposed by the Kashmir Darbar received the assent of the government of India.⁴⁴

In recompense for his "worthy efforts and meritorious services" during the Gilgit disturbances, Aman-ul-Mulk was presented Rs. 50,000 by the Kashmir State. In addition to this, his annual subsidy was made double, so that, "the loyal and noble spirit, which has been fixed in your heart since the beginning, may be doubled."⁴⁵

Recall of the Agent

The Gilgit disturbances easily lead us to the conclusion that Major Biddulph had not at all succeeded in cultivating friendly relations with the tribes on the frontier, who remained as inimical to the Gilgit authorities as ever. He also had failed to supply any valuable intelligence of passing events from Gilgit. In this memorandum on the position of the 'British Officer at Gilgit' with regard to the events of the autumn of 1880, Henvey thus says, "I cannot call to mind a single instance in which valuable intelligence of passing events has come from Gilgit."⁴⁶ The Gilgit Agency had thus failed to achieve its objectives.

It may be questioned as to what encompassed the failure of the Agency. It is alleged that the Agency failed because the Maharaja indulged in a game of double-dealing. "The ally whose influence a British Agent at Gilgit was supposed to spread as a bulwark against Russia and Afghanistan, was found to have been in secret correspondence with both."⁴⁷ But, according to another authority, the Maharaja rendered much valuable service to the British by getting secret information of

43. Henvey to Lyall, June 30, 1881 (Confdl), GOI, Fgn, Sec-E, August 1884, Nos. 4-19; Aman-ul-Mulk to Commissioner and Superintendent, Peshawar Division, January 15, 1881, GOI, Fgn, Sec, July 1881, Nos. 314-399.

44. Fgn to Henvey, No. 1463, E.P.; July 11, 1881, GOI, Fgn, Sec-E, August 1884, Nos. 4-19.

45. Maharaja to Aman-ul-Mulk, July 22, 1881, GOI, Fgn, Sec, January 1882, Nos. 741-776 C.

46. Henvey to Lyall, November 22, 1880, (Confdl), GOI, Fgn, Sec, December 1880, Nos. 83-153.

47. Alder, G.J, p. 130.

the doings of Russia in Central Asia and by keeping a strict watch on her movements.⁴⁸ Furthermore, treachery was never proved against the Maharaja.⁴⁹ Under the circumstances, the charge of double-dealing levelled against the Maharaja is questionable.

Again, the Maharaja is accused of non-co-operation with Major Biddulph. It is alleged that, "Biddulph's life at Gilgit was deliberately made unpleasant by the Kashmir authorities."⁵⁰ This, too, appears to be a baseless charge for, once when Biddulph made a grouse against the Gilgit Governor, Bhai Ganga Singh, and his son, Bhai Gurubaksh Singh, on vague and untrustworthy evidence, according to both Henvey, the Resident in Kashmir; and A.C. Lyall, Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign Department, the Maharaja forthwith recalled these functionaries of his.⁵¹ And when in the autumn of 1878 Biddulph decided upon going to Yasin and Chitral, the Maharaja made every possible endeavour to render practicable help for the comfort of the journey of the British Agent to these wild countries. For this purpose, hostages were secured at Gilgit from these territories,⁵² and a letter was written to Aman-ul-Mulk, in which the Maharaja described Major Biddulph as one of the high officers of the British government and as a friend of his, and directed him to show respect to him in every way. The result was, as we have seen, that Major Biddulph received a tolerably friendly welcome in these countries.⁵³ And the Governor-General felt satisfaction at this "happy termination of Major Biddulph's

48. Bose, Jogendra Chandra, *Kashmir and its Prince*, 1889, p. 8.

49. Alder, G.J., p. 130.

50. *Ibid.*

51. GOI, Fgn, Sec, October 1879, Nos. 160-231; Memo by Major Biddulph on the present condition of affairs in Gilgit, GOI, Fgn, Sec, July 1881, Nos. 314-399.

52. Memo by Major Biddulph on the present condition of affairs in Gilgit GOI, Fgn, Sec, July 1881, Nos. 314-399; F. Henvey to Maharaja, September 2, 1878, GOI, Fgn, Sec, October 1879, Nos. 267-310.

53. Maharaja to Aman-ul-Mulk, September 12, 1878, GOI, Fgn, Sec., October 1879, Nos. 267-310.

journey".⁵⁴ The causes that brought about the failure of the Agency, in the light of the above, are different:—

First, it appears that the Maharaja's officers at Gilgit, against his own wishes, did not like that they should have an English boss over them. They had unleashed their machinations against Biddulph even before he had arrived at that place. Biddulph writes thus, "My baggage was openly plundered by an official, false reports of an alarming nature were made to me, a report was transmitted that the Governor would not be responsible for my safety....."

And again, "During my residence in Gilgit everything was done to create discomfort in small matters. The people of the country were abused and frequently punished for rendering small services to myself and followers. Constant difficulties were raised about supplies, quarrels and discontents were fomented among my servants, and pressure was put upon them in small matters to force them to leave my service"⁵⁵

Secondly, the Agency was placed in some "inevitable difficulties." According to the government of India, "The position of the Gilgit Agent in the remote corner of a foreign State obliged him to deal chiefly with these tribes through the medium, not always trustworthy or favourable.... An attempt to exercise direct influence would have been met by suspicion and jealousy: while he was continually hampered by the double-dealing, intrigues, and feuds of the petty Chiefs over whom he had no real control".⁵⁶

Thirdly, Biddulph, during his tenure as British Agent in Gilgit, did not act wisely. He rarely gave the authority for the reports which he sent. He meddled with the conduct and affairs of the agents of the Kashmir Darbar.⁵⁷ He made charges against the Gilgit Governor about some of which there was

54. F. Henvey to A.C. Lyall, December 31, 1878 (Confdl), GOI, Fgn, Sec, January 1879, Nos. 341-343.

55. GOI, Fgn, Sec, July, 1881, Nos. 314-399.

56. Government of India to SSI, 103, July 15, 1881, GOI, Fgn, Sec-E, August 1884, Nos. 4-19.

57. Henvey to Lyall, December 31, 1878, GOI, Fgn, Sec, October 1879, Nos. 143-521.

not even a shadow of evidence.⁵⁸ He miserably failed to understand people on the frontier. He branded Raja Jaffer Khan of Nagar as disloyal and succeeded in persuading the Maharaja to stop his annual subsidy.⁵⁹ He believed in the sincerity of Pahlwan Bahadur of Yasin and branded Aman-ul-Mulk of Chitral as "unscrupulous and deceitful to an uncommon degree."⁶⁰ But, the Gilgit disturbances proved that Jaffer Khan and Aman-ul-Mulk were loyal to the Maharaja, while Pahlwan was an untrustworthy and turbulent Chieftain on the north-west frontier of his territory.

Fourthly, the garrison at Gilgit had to be victualled from Kashmir, with difficulty and expense. One of the Chief anxieties was the scarcity of fodder, which made transport dear and inadequate. For six months in the year, too, the Agency was cut off from India owing to the impossibility of crossing the high passes which lay on the route.⁶¹ Two of them—the Kamri at 14,300 feet⁶² and Tragbal at nearly 10,000 feet—were both liable to sudden gales of deadly cold so intense that⁶³ in the winter of 1877-78 of upwards of a hundred men perished on the latter one.⁶⁴ The result of these natural barriers was that the Gilgit authorities could not maintain an efficient and adequate force within the limits of the Agency. When the outbreak of, 1880 thus occurred, there were only seven hundred and fifty men at Gilgit to oppose a tribal combination numbering in thousands. Nor were these troops in any efficient condition. The Kashmir Darbar, it appears, were responsible for the rottenness and inefficiency of their military force in Gilgit. For, in 1880 Biddulph discovered, as we have already mentioned,

58. Trans-Frontier Journal for the month of April 1890, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, May 1890, Nos. 277-279.

59. Henvey to Biddulph, No. 284, July 18, 1880, GOI, Fgn, Sec, October 1880, Nos. 121-136.

60. F. Henvey to A.C. Lyall, January 11, 1879, GOI, Fgn, Sec, October 1879, Nos. 267-310.

61. Col. R.C.F., Schomberg, pp. 12-13.

62. Sinha, Sachchidananda, *Kashmir: The Playground of Asia. A Handbook for Visitors to the Happy Valley*, 1942, p. 251.

63. Alder, G.J, p. 133.

64. Memo by Major Biddulph on the present condition of Affairs in Gilgit, GOI, Fgn, Sec, July 1881, Nos. 314-399.

that the officers were incapable and a large portion of them were from old age and sickness, unfit for active service in a mountainous country. As regards other ranks, many of them were boys of twelve years of age, or raw recruits, that did not know "how to do anything except eat, they all showed a strong preference for the inside of the fort, few of them had ever triggered off their rifles, and many did not even know how to load them, trouble on this head, however, was obviated by no ammunition being served out to them."⁶⁵

Fifthly, the Kashmir grip, and through it the British one, on Gilgit was bound to be weak. It was inevitable that the Muslim tribes on the frontier would resist to the uttermost any extension of the influence of their traditional Hindu enemy. Their relations with Kashmir were based on no community of interest and would normally have been distant, if not actually hostile. Aman-ul-Mulk in particular was in an impossible position. "If Madhopore was to succeed, he had to align himself with the 'cow worshippers' of Kashmir and the British 'Kaffirs'—the one he scorned, and the other he scarcely knew—against the free Islam of the wild neighbours who surrounded him, and in face of the ever-present menace from Kabul. And nothing that British India offered could affect these basic facts of Chitral's political environment".⁶⁶

Sixthly and finally, behind all these political and military factors stultifying the Madhopore policy, lies a less obvious strategical weakness. Colonel Gordon had been the first to sketch a scheme of defence for the northern frontier based on Gilgit and it was designed to meet the danger of a Russian advance across the Pamirs and over the easy Yasin Passes, which he and Biddulph had revealed while exploring with Forsythe's mission in 1874. In 1876, however, as has been seen, Biddulph's second visit had shown that the Yasin Passes were unimportant and that the Baroghil Pass into Chitral was the most vulnerable of all. Moreover, all the evidence suggested,

65. Biddulph to Henvey, October 29, 1880, GOI, Fgn, Sec, December 1880, Nos. 83-153; Gilgit Diary No. 132, GOI, Fgn, Sec, December 1880, Nos. 53-82.

66. Alder, G.J., p. 134.

although no Englishman at that time had travelled along it to confirm it, that the route south of the Baroghil through Chitral was also easy. And yet Gilgit, which Madhopore constituted the basis of Chitral's defence, was separated from it by two hundred and twenty miles of bad road, by the 12,000 feet of the Shandur Pass, and by a dangerous defile in which in 1895, a British officer and a party of Sikhs, as will be seen in the following pages, were wiped out to a man by tribesmen contesting the passage.

It is true that Iytton hoped at Madhopore that Kashmir could gain an effective control over Chitral without the full absorption which was planned for Yasin. Biddulph thought so too at first and, in any case, he believed that "By having Yasin under our influence and strengthening Gilgit.....it would be impossible for any force to advance down the Chitral valley with the prospect of being taken in flank".

But Kashmir did not gain an effective control over Yasin, and even the Maharaja's grip on Gilgit was suspect. And, even without the Kashmir failure, there was a fundamental weakness in a scheme which, based on Gilgit to the east, was meant to defend the Chitral Passes to the west.⁶⁷ On the strategical weakness of the Gilgit scheme, Henvey thus comments, "This place (Gilgit) is on the wrong side of the Hindukush for news : it is on the road to nowhere, and is merely an outpost pushed forward by Kashmir for military purposes."⁶⁸

The failure of the Gilgit Agency to deliver the goods led the government of India to think of the recall of Biddulph from Gilgit. In the Gilgit disturbances Biddulph had found himself 'obliged to abandon his house and seek humiliating refuge within the fort of Gilgit'.⁶⁹ And though these were quelled by the Dogras, with the help of the British and the Chitralis, yet, certainly much ill-feeling prevailed among the frontier tribes, and the recurrence of a crisis was merely a question of time and opportunity.⁷⁰ Neither the government of India, nor the

67. *Ibid.*, pp, 136-137.

68. Henvey to Lyall, November [22, 1880, (Confdl), GOI, Fgn, Sec, December 1880, Nos. 83-153.

69. *Ibid.*

70. Gilgit Diary No. 145, GOI, Fgn, Sec, July 1878, Nos. 53-94.

Maharaja of Kashmir, was at that time in a position to answer for the safety of a British officer at Gilgit in the event of a sudden attack upon the place by the independent and unruly tribes of the neighbourhood.⁷¹ Biddulph's life in Gilgit was thus ever in peril.

Under the circumstances, Henvey reported to the government of India in March 1881 : "It appears to be.....unquestionable that, under existing circumstance; with a constantly recurring risk of disturbances, which in the remote and isolated situation of Gilgit may at an unfortunate moment assume formidable dimensions, even a moderate degree of security cannot be guaranteed to the British officer in that region, and that excursions beyond the border cannot be undertaken by them without immediate danger". "In short", he concluded, "The British Agency at Gigit can only be kept up at the expense of embarrassment and dangers quite disproportionate to the good which can now be expected to arise therefrom. And it is neither for the benefit of the Imperial government, nor for the advantage of the Maharaja that the Agency should be maintained in such conditions".⁷²

At the same time it may be pointed out that Russophobia, which had obliged the Indian government to establish their Agency at Gilgit, had, by June 1879, decreased to some extent. For, on May 26, 1879, was concluded the Treaty of Gandamak between Afghanistan and India, by which Afghanistan became friendly to India and the control of her Foreign Relations passed into the hands of the British government.⁷³ And the Russo-Afghan friendship, which had developed by 1877, and which was responsible for the outbreak of Indo-Afghan War of 1878, had ended.⁷⁴

71. Government of India to SSI, No. 103, July 15, 1881, GOI, Fgn, Sec-E, August 1884, Nos. 4-19.

72. Memo on the question of withdrawing the British Agency, GOI; Fgn, Sec-E, August 1884, Nos. 4-19.

73. Government of India, Fgn, to Viscount Granbrook, No. 160, July 7, 1879, GOI, Fgn, Sec, July 1879, No. 185.

74. Henvey to Lyall, May 18, 1881 (Confdl), GOI, Fgn, Sec-E, August 1884, Nos. 4-19; Government of India, Fgn, to Viscount Granbrook, No. 160, July 7, 1879, GOI, Fgn, Sec, July 1879, No. 185.

All these factors combinedly exercised their influence on the mind of the Governor-General, Lord Ripon, who summoned both Henvey and Biddulph to Simla for personal discussions on the subject. These confabulations resulted in the withdrawal of the Gilgit Agency being decided upon.⁷⁵ And Colonel Tanner, the officiating Agent in Gilgit, left Gilgit for India on July 20, 1881,⁷⁶ and thus was the Agency withdrawn.

The government of India, however, decided that the Maharaja was not be allowed to understand that the withdrawal of the Agency was final. On the contrary, the British reserved full discretion to send back an officer to Gilgit if that should thereafter seem desirable. The Kashmir State was also expected to supply to the government of India an early and accurate information of the course of events throughout the region lying to its northern frontier. The State was also required to consult the 'Officer on Special Duty in Kashmir' on matters affecting its relations with any of the neighbouring States.⁷⁷

The withdrawal of the Gilgit Agency was, in the circumstances, only temporary. And the scheme received the sanction of Hartington, the Secretary of State for India, who, pointing to the temporary withdrawal of the Agency, observed: "It cannot be overlooked that the effect of the withdrawal of the Agent may possibly be practically to close a valuable channel of information as to the course of events in the countries between Kashmir and Russian Turkestan, at a moment when such information is likely to be of particular interest.....In the event of the Maharaja failing to keep you informed of what is passing on his bordersit might be necessary to reconsider the expediency of deputing an officer to Gilgit, at all events during the summer."⁷⁸

75. Lyall to Henvey, No. 1293 E.P; June 18, 1881, GOI, Fgn, Sec-E, August 1884, Nos. 4-9.

76. Henvey to Lyall, No. 359, July 15, 1881, GOI, Fgn, Sec, January 1882, Nos. 741-776 C.

77. Government of India to SSI, No. 130, July 15, 1881, GOI, Fgn, Sec-E, August 1884, Nos. 4-19.

78. SSI to Government of India, No. 36 (Sec), September 16, 1881, GOI, Fgn, Sec, January 1882, Nos. 741-776C.

Reappointment of the Agent, 1889

As we have seen earlier, following the recall of the British Agent from Gilgit, the government of India had expected the Kashmir State to supply to them an early and accurate information of the course of events throughout the region lying to its northern frontier; and to consult the 'Officer on Special Duty in Kashmir' on matters affecting its relations with any of the neighbouring States.

But it was not long before Henvey, the Officer on Special Duty in Kashmir, started complaining that he was being systematically starved of information by the Kashmir authorities. In fact, it was the general complaint that the Maharaja did not deal in an open and candid manner with the government of India. He often concealed information on frontier matters and acted in manners the British did not relish.¹

Besides, Afghan intrigue in Chitral and other tribal territories of Dir, Swat, Bajaur, Jandul etc; Russia's military activities in Central Asia and the visits of her representatives to places like Hunza, and the Hunza and Nagar hostilities against the weak Kashmir force at Gilgit, propelled the government of India to reconsider the sending back of their Agent to Gilgit. A brief account as to how all this happened may now follow.

The Afghan Interference in Chitral—The Amir of Afghanistan had always held the opinion that Chitral, Dir, Swat, Bajaur, Jandul, and other tribal territories to the north of Peshawar, and on the north-west frontier of Kashmir, were dependencies of

1. C. Grant to Henvey, July 11, 1882 (Confidential), GOI, Fgn, Sec-E, September 1882, Nos . 586-628; Alder G, J., p. 144.

Kabul and he, as will be seen, made persistent endeavours to assume sovereignty over these territories. The government of India however, never recognised any claim on the part of the Afghan ruler to allegiance from these areas.²

For the first time, after the withdrawal of the Gilgit Agency in 1881, the Amir of Afghanistan, Abd-ar-Rahman, claimed suzerainty over Chitral in 1882. In a stiff letter from Kabul, dated March 20, 1882, he claimed Chitral in unqualified terms, asked its ruler, Aman-ul-Mulk, to acknowledge his suzerainty³, and declared that the British had no right of interference with the affairs of this Chiefship.⁴

The Governor-General of India, Lord Ripon, could not leave the letter unchallenged. After telegraphic reference to London for permission to threaten Abd-ar-Rahman with 'force of arms if needful',⁵ Ripon warned him, rather in somewhat a gentle manner, that India was committed, both to Kashmir's suzerainty over Chitral and to the defence of the Maharaja's rights there. In reply, Abd-ar-Rahman promised to desist from interference in the affairs of Chitral in the future.

But, despite this pledge by the Amir, there was no tangible slackening of Afghan pressure on Chitral. On the contrary, at the end of 1883 the Indian government began to fear an invasion of Chitral by the Afghan forces from Badakhshan on the one side, and from Jalalabad on the other. The Amir was warned off once again and, for a year or two, Afghan pressure on Chitral seems to have become lax.⁶

In 1887, however, the relations between Afghanistan and Chitral deteriorated once again. On the 14th of June an

2. Viceroy to Sir R. Pollock, Peshawar, March 30, 1877, GOI, Fgn, Sec, July-1877, Nos. 34-60B.

3. Amir of Afghanistan to General Amir Ahmad, March 20, 1882, GOI, Fgn, Sec, April 1882, Nos. 353-360.

4. F. Henvey to C. Grant, April 24, 1882, GOI, Fgn, Sec, April 1882, Nos. 428-441.

5. Viceroy to SSI, No. 573 E.P., April 11, 1882, GOI, Fgn, Sec, April 1882, Nos. 353-360.

6. C. Grant to General Amir Ahmad, May 3, 1882, GOI, Fgn, Sec, April 1882, Nos. 353-360 ; Ghose, Dilip Kumar, *Kashmir in Transition*, 1975, p. 152 ; Alder, G.J., p. 148.

official of the Amir came to Chitral to arrange for the betrothal of one of the Methar's daughters⁷ to the Amir's eldest son, Sardar Habib-ulla Khan.⁸ And to hustle the Mehtar into concluding this matrimonial alliance, the Amir imprisoned the Chitral Agent in Kabul.⁹ In addition to the political pressures, Abd-ar-Rahman added economic sanctions as well, when the trade route into Chitral from Badakhshan was closed causing serious loss of revenue to Aman-ul-Mulk on account of transit duties. The Afghans began also to charge sky-rocketing duties on timber floating down the Kunar River from Chitral towards Peshawar.¹⁰ Aman, however, did not succumb to this pressure and continued to be reluctant to enter into the said marriage alliance with the Afghan ruler without the sanction of the British Government.¹¹

Afghan Intrigues in Swat, Dir, Bajaur etc.

The intrigues of Abd-ar-Rahman among the tribes to the west and south of Chitral alarmed Aman-ul-Mulk the most.¹² In February 1883 the Amir was threatening to invade Bajaur, Swat etc. unless their Chiefs came to Kabul by the 12th of October, to make their submission.¹³ Ripon was not inclined to take these threats seriously, but under pressure from London he warned the Amir that Bajaur, Dir, and Swat were all beyond Afghan influence.¹⁴ The warning had no effect. Reports in 1884-85 showed, if anything, an intensification of Afghan intrigues in, and threats to, this quarter.¹⁵ In 1885 the Amir

7. Jamadar Rab Nawaz Khan to SGI, July 26, 1887, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, October 1887, Nos. 58-70.

8. GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, October 1887, Nos. 58-70.

9. Atta Ulla Khan to SGI, No. 56 of July 13, 1888, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, August 1888, Nos. 59-81.

10. Peshawar Confdl Diary No. 7, of April 17, 1888, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, May 1888, Nos. 38-39 : Aman-ul-Mulk to Viceroy, June 3, 1888, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, August 1888, Nos. 59-81.

11. Aman-ul-Mulk to Viceroy, July 27, 1887, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, October 1887, Nos. 58-70.

12. Alder, G.J, p. 149.

13. Lt. Col. Sardar Muhammad Afzal Khan to SGI. Fgn, No. 61, August 10, 1883, GOI, Fgn, Sec-E, September 1883, Nos. 125-129.

14. GOI, Fgn, Sec-E, May 1884, Nos. 296-343 ; Alder, G.J., p. 149.

15. GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, September 1885, Nos. 1-43.

exploited his visit to Rawalpindi to the full, by intrigues on his way home and afterwards. He wrote and talked as if Dufferin had given him a blank cheque in Swat and Bajaur.¹⁶ It is interesting to notice that, during the Rawalpindi conference, the British did in fact consider the possible reversal of a forty-year-old policy by permitting, instead of opposing, the extension of Afghan influence among these tribes. Dufferin believed that such an offer would leave the de facto situation unchanged, since the Amir would not be strong enough to make his occupation effective. But this was a risky assumption, to say the least. Fortunately, since the Amir proved surprisingly accommodating about Russian gains on his northern frontier, the question of buying his complaisance with offers in the tribal lands to the south-east was never discussed at Rawalpindi at all.¹⁷

The Afghan menace nevertheless continued to increase. In August 1886 it was reported that the Amir was taking measures to annex to Kunar some of the Passes held by independent tribes with a view to facilitating his advance upon Kafiristan, Chitral and Bajaur. In short, the Afghan menace persisted, and continued to be a source of trouble to the Indian government which could not be overlooked for long.¹⁸

Russia's Military Activities in Central Asia

Even more important than the Afghan menace was the steady advance of Russia in Central Asia that urged upon the consideration of Ripon's government the question of defence of the northern frontier. The Russian influence in Afghanistan, as we have seen, had declined and this, among other factors, had enabled the British to withdraw their Agent from Gilgit in 1881. But the Russian armies continued their drive towards the Oxus and the northern frontier of Afghanistan, which ever remained a source of anxiety to the British.¹⁹

16. Peshawar Confdl Diary No. 2, February 13, 1886, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, July 1886, Nos. 222-239 ; Ghose, Dilip Kumar, *Kashmir in Transition*, 1975, p. 152.

17. Alder, G.J, p. 149.

18. Atta-ulla-Khan to SGI, No. 30, April 13, 1888, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, May 1888, Nos. 48-55 ; Lansdowne to C.P. Ilbert, May 21, 1892, Lansdowne Papers, Reel No. 1, NAI ; Ghose, Dilip Kumar, *Kashmir in Transition*, 1975, p. 162.

19. *Ibid.*

After the end of Khiva's independence, as we have already seen, in 1873, a trans-Caspian military zone had been formed with two centres—Mangishlak and Krasnovodsk—which came under the command of the army of the Caucasus. In 1877, about the time the British Agency at Gilgit was established, the Russians occupied Qizil Arvat, and in 1879, attacked Gok Tepe,²⁰ where their troops, under General Lomakin, suffered a serious defeat at the hands of the Tekke Turcomans, losing about 200 men killed and 250 wounded.²¹ The effect of this defeat was disastrous to Czarist prestige outside of the Russian empire as well as in Central Asia. Consequently, the following year, the expedition under General Skobelev, whose mission was to settle the Turkmen affair, received rigorous instructions from the Czar:

“Under no circumstances may be fixed plan be departed from, nor the least backward step be taken, for this would be for Europe and Asia a sign of our weakness, would inspire still greater boldness on the part of our adversaries, and might cost Russia infinitely more than the whole expedition.”

General Skobelev's army totalled more than 11,000 men and some 100 cannon. The decisive moment of the campaign was the capture of the fortress of Gok Tepe on January 12, 1881, after a long and bloody siege which destroyed any possibility of lasting Turkmen resistance. Three days later, a detachment commanded by Colonel A.N. Europatkin took possession of Askhabad. In a few weeks, the Chief of the Turkmen tribes in the conquered regions surrendered to Skobelev.²² And now there remained a single oasis between the Russians and the Afghan border: the Merv oasis, which was only 130 miles from the Afghan border.²³ This too was gobbled up by the Russians in January 1884, by inducing its Chiefs to tender their allegiance

20. Allworth, Edward, *Central Asia: A Century of Russian Rule*, 1967, p. 147.

21. H.A. Churchill to Ronald F. Thomson, No. 48, November 15, 1879, GOI, Fgn, Sec, February 1880, Nos. 126-129.

22. Memo by the Foreign Office dated, October 30, 1926. GOI, Fgn, and Pol (Confidential), File No. 264-X of 1927, Nos. 1-114: Allworth, Edward, *Central Asia: A Century of Russian Rule*, 1967, p. 148.

23. Swinson, Arthur, *North-west Frontier*, pp. 197-198.

to the Russian Emperor,²⁴ which they did at Askhabad on the 31st.²⁵ The same year Persia ceded Sarakhs (south-west of Merv) to Russia.

Merv was deemed by military men a place of great strategic importance. The tidings of its occupation by Russia was, therefore, received with great alarm at Kabul, Calcutta and London. And the intensity of feeling prevalent in England was aptly called as 'Mervousness' by the Duke of Argyll.

Russia had, time and again, assured the British government that Merv lay beyond the Russian sphere of influence. After the occupation of Merv, the British and the Afghans were not sure whether the Russians could any more be trusted in regard to the territorial integrity of Afghanistan. They wanted to get the Russian promises translated into some tacit agreement.²⁶

Under the circumstances, Lord Granville thought it "fair" to inform the Russian Ambassador to London, Baron Mohrenheim, that "the news (concerning Merv) had not been received with indifference", and added that he proposed to send to St. Petersburg an "expression of our views".

Russia justified her action in Merv in seeming contravention of her repeated promises by the declaration that the Merv Chiefs had themselves suddenly resolved to request the protection of the Imperial government, and Russia had in turn but exercised her freedom of decision in accepting their professed submission.²⁷

After the Merv incident, the British felt it necessary to delimit the northern frontiers of Afghanistan as early as possible lest Russia should start developing any claims on the Afghan territories. A joint commission for the purpose was proposed but Russia dilly—dallied and before anything concrete in the matter could be done Russia marched her troops and forcibly occupied Panjdeh in March 1885. Panjdeh was a territory

24. Habberton, William, *Afghanistan, 1837-1907*, 1937, p. 49.

25. Sir E. Thornton to Earl of Granville, No. 32, February 24, 1884, GOI, Fgn, Sec-E, May 1884, Nos. 12-51.

26. Memo by the Foreign Office, dated October 30, 1926, GOI, Fgn and Pol, Confdl, File No. 264-X of 1927, Nos. 1-114; Bilgrami, Asghar H, *Afghanistan and British India 1793-1907*, 1972, p. 203.

27. Habberton, William, *Afghanistan, 1837-1907*, pp. 50-51.

which Afghanistan claimed as her own. Russia insisted that it should be considered as independent of the Amir of Afghanistan. In vain did the British propose that the matter should be left to the joint commission for its final disposal.

This forcible occupation of Panjdeh excited the popular opinion in England so much so that the matter was discussed in the Parliament where the Gladstone Ministry was bitterly attacked by the Conservatives. Gladstone himself termed Russian occupation of Panjdeh as 'an unprovoked aggression' and easily obtained a vote of credit for 11 million pound sterling for special military preparations. Military reserves were called up, but in the heart of hearts Gladstone did not want war with Russia for the sake of Afghanistan. A face-saving scheme was evolved under which Russia agreed to waive her claims on another territory, Zulfikar, in return for the British acceptance of her claims on Panjdeh.

Gladstone Ministry was able to present this as a graceful concession of Russia to the British wishes but realization had been brought home that some concrete steps would have to be taken to check the expansionist designs of Russia towards the Kashmir borders.²⁸

Lockhart's Exploratory Mission to the Hindukush

As a result of the Panjdeh crisis the government of India sent Colonel Lockhart the Deputy Quarter-Master-General, on an expedition to explore the Passes of the Hindukush. His instructions were : First, to make his way through Kashmir and Gilgit to Chitral. On arrival there, he was to enter into friendly relations with Mehtar Aman-ul-Mulk, and was to endeavour with his assistance to obtain full information regarding Chitral and the neighbouring districts subject to his control. He was to report upon the material resources of this country, upon the number and condition of its inhabitants, upon the

28. GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, September 1885, Nos. 44-61 ; GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, September 1885 ; Nos. 1107-1114 ; Brigadier-General Stuart Beatson, *A History of the Imperial Service Troops of Native States*, 1903, p. II ; for details see Habberton, William, *Afghanistan, 1837-1907*, 1937, pp. 53-56 ; Swinson, Arthur, *North-west Frontier*, 1967, p. 201 ; Tripathi, G.P, *Indo-Afghan Relations, 1882-1907*, 1973, pp. 39-40 ; Bilgrami, Asghar H, *Afghanistan and British India 1793-1907*, 1972, p. 211.

routes and Passes leading through and from it, and generally upon all matters likely to prove of interest to the government of India.

Secondly, he was desired to endeavour, if possible, to penetrate into Kafiristan, and explore it thoroughly, with the object of gaining the good-will of the inhabitants of that country, and securing all possible information regarding the Passes leading from Kafiristan across the Hindukush.²⁹

Lockhart failed in exploring Kafiristan, owing to the opposition of the Amir of Kabul, but he made a very interesting journey and added much to the information of the government of India.

Lockhart demonstrated that the Baroghil Pass which had hitherto been considered to be "the easiest avenue to Gilgit" did not really lead to that place or anywhere else "by any practicable route for pack animals." The easiest route to Chitral from the side of Badakhshan was the Dora Pass which was about 14,800 feet high. Even then the difficulties of the routes south of these Passes were such that Lockhart came to the conclusion :

"that without unlimited time and unlimited labour resources the feat of crossing an army over the section of the Hindukush visited by myself was an impossibility."

Lockhart, however, admitted that lightly armed troops could cross the Hindukush and cause mischief on the north-west frontier. To encounter this mischief he suggested the establishment of a British Agency at Gilgit. He also recommended that a native agent be appointed at Chitral. For the defence of Chitral he suggested that a military road be constructed from Peshawar through Dir and Chitral to the Dora Pass, and a mobile scout force be enlisted for blocking the Passes in an emergency. This force was to be supported by an artillery battery from the Punjab and nineteen British officers. The defence of Gilgit, on the other hand, was to be assumed by the government of India and no Kashmir troops were to be employed there.

29. SGI to Col Lockhart, No. 1043-F, June 6, 1885, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, August 1885, Nos. 12-81.

The scheme, however, was rejected by the government of India on financial grounds.³⁰

Lockhart's proposal, however, could not be ignored for long particularly in view of Russia's continued expansionist activities in Central Asia. Russian surveyors had been found in Shignan in 1883 accompanied by armed escorts. They also visited the Pamirs.³¹ In 1886 Russia occupied the Afghan district of Karki on the Oxus.³² There had been massing of Russian troops at different points in the Central Asian territory, and rumours were in the air that an advance would be made towards Chitral. Different stations in the conquered territories were being linked by roads and bridges,³³ and the trans-Caspian railway was making rapid progress.

This Railway had begun in 1880. It started from Krasnovodsk and, following the Persian and Afghan borders, it reached Merv in 1886, and by 1888 this railroad was completed upto Smarkand. However, the trans-Caspian Railway was formally opened in 1888, and its later branches connected it to Tashkand and Andijan, in the vicinity of the Chinese frontier. Its branch which excited special jealousy and anxiety on the part of the British government was built "to run from Merv to the Afghan frontier where a fortified post, Kuchka, was erected. "Thus the construction of trans-Caspian Railroad brought Central Asia and China nearer to Europe, and opened to Russia fertile fields for her commercial expansion. It not only speeded up Russo-Persian trade but also made it possible for the government of St. Petersburg to easily despatch troops to the Persian and Afghan borders. Thus this railway had economic as well

30. Memo on the question of acquiring Gilgit, and erecting there a British cantonment, Lockhart to Foreign Secretary, February 27, 1886, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, May 1886, Nos. 164-266 ; Ghose, Dilip Kumar, *Kashmir in Transition*, 1975, pp. 160-162.

31. Peshawar Confdl Diary No. 10, July 1, 1883, GOI, Fgn, Sec-E, July 1883, Nos. 368-369.

32. Memo by the Foreign Office, dated October 30, 1926, GOI, Fgn, and Pol (Confdl), File No. 264-X of 1927, Nos. 1-114 ; GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, February 1888, Nos. 505-584.

33. Peshawar Confdl Diary No. 5, dated May 31, 1885, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, December 1885, Nos. 1-17.

as strategic importance, and was bound to affect British interests adversely, and, therefore, it gave the British a cause for anxiety.³⁴

Already in 1887 some Russian travellers were reported to have visited Hunza.³⁵ In the train of this new Russian advance came Captain Gromchevsky whose mission was evidently to explore the possibilities of Russian penetration across the Hindukush.³⁶

It was at this juncture that India's Foreign Secretary, Sir Mortimer Durand, proposed to lay down his personal opinion on the question of the defence of the Indian Empire. He observed that the establishment of Russian posts within striking distance of the Indian Empire necessitated a thorough consideration of "our future course of policy". He recommended the re-establishment of the Gilgit Agency under one or more English Officers, assisted by a good corps of Dogras raised from the small Muhammedan Chiefships of the neighbourhood. From Gilgit efforts should be made to cultivate the friendship of the tribes on the Kashmir frontier.³⁷ This proposal was accepted by the government of India.³⁸

In the meanwhile the question of Kashmiri control over the Chieftains of Hunza and Nagar added urgency to the matter. These small states occupied a position of peculiar importance. From their country Passes led to Chinese territory on the east and to the Pamir on the north.³⁹ These States, in January 1888, rose in rebellion against Kashmir authority, and, with a force of 2,000 men, ejected the Kashmir troops from their posts.

34. Peshawar Confdl Diary No. 10, dated June 6, 1888, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, July 1888, Nos. 237-242 ; Tripathi, G.P., *Indo-Afghan Relations, 1882-1907*, 1973, p. 51.

35. Peshawar Confdl Diary No. 17 of September 14, 1887, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, January 1888, Nos. 246-269.

36. F.E. Younghusband to R. Parry Nisbet, October 24, 1889, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, February 1890, Nos. 59-84.

37. Memo on the present position in Central Asia by H.M. Durand, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, October 1887, Nos. 286-291.

38. Memo by T.C. Plowden on the New Policy for the protection of the north-western frontier of Kashmir, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, July 1888, Nos. 63-86.

39. GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, May, 1889, Nos. 544-559.

at Chalt and Chaprote. After this they advanced to Nomal, within 14 or 15 miles of Gilgit, and besieged two forts there. Reinforcements were immediately sent from Gilgit which frightened the tribesmen into raising the siege.⁴⁰ For the recovery of the frontier posts, a special commission, backed by sufficient troops, was sent from Srinagar with instructions to obtain possession of Chalt and Chaprote by peaceable means, if possible, by force, if necessary.⁴¹ The arrival of troops from Srinagar raised the strength of the Gilgit garrison to more than 7,000 men. The force, however, suffered severely from want of supplies and sickness, and the expenditure incurred was very great but eventually the Hunza and Nagar States concluded a peace by which they consented to the re-occupation of Chalt by a Kashmiri garrison.⁴² And the Kashmir troops, with the exception of the usual garrison, were withdrawn from Gilgit by the autumn of 1888.⁴³

These disturbances indicated a serious collapse of the Darbar policy and testified to the inefficiency and weakness of its frontier administration. And the Resident in Kashmir, T.C. Plowden, urged the government of India to carry into effect the conclusions specified by H.M. Durand for the protection of the north-western frontier of Kashmir.⁴⁴ In other words, he proposed the re-establishment of the Gilgit Agency.

In these circumstances, the government of India decided to depute an officer to the Gilgit frontier to ascertain the military position there. Captain Algernon Durand of the Quarter

40. Diwan Janki Prasad to Diwan Lachman Dass, No. 163, January 31, 1888, JK 12 of 1888; Mulraj to Janki Prasad, JK 16 of 1888; Amar Singh to Plowden, No. 282, April 22, 1888, JK 16 of 1888.

41. Plowden to SGI, Fgn, No. 35-C, May 9, 1888, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, July 1888, Nos. 63-86; Maharaja to General Punjab Singh and Bakhshi Mulraj and members of the Gilgit Commission, August 13, 1888, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, September 1888, Nos. 176-190; Col Algernon Durand, *Making of a Frontier*, 1899, p. 13.

42. Government of India to SSI, No. 4 (Front), January 6, 1892, GOI, Fgn, Front-A, January 1892, Nos. 15-130.

43. Col Algernon Durand, *Making of a Frontier*, 1899, p. 13.

44. Confdl memo by T.C. Plowden on the new policy for the protection of the north-western frontier of Kashmir, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, July 1888, Nos. 63-86.

Master General's Department was selected for that purpose and was required to examine the situation at Gilgit with reference to the recent tribal disturbances, and to report upon it for the information of the British government. He was asked to see the military position from a general point of view, having regard to possible future complications with Russia, and to work out in detail a scheme for rendering this point secure without the aid of British troops.⁴⁵

Captain Durand, with Dr. Robertson, spent the summer and autumn of 1888 in visiting Gilgit, Chitral and other places.⁴⁶ And on this return recommended the reconstitution of the Gilgit Agency, and the construction of a direct road to Chitral from the Peshawar frontier via Dir.⁴⁷

On the basis of Durand's scheme, the government of India, in March 1889, settled that the Gilgit Agency be re-established. Captain Durand himself was chosen for the post, with a couple of Assistants and an Agency Surgeon—Dr. Robertson being detailed for the latter post.⁴⁸

Among the reasons which influenced the government of India in arriving at this decision a special significance was attached to Russian expansion in Central Asia. In a Despatch to the Secretary of State, the government of India stated that the advance of Russia upto the frontiers of Afghanistan, and the great development of her military resources in Asia had admittedly increased the necessity for strengthening the British line of defence, and that among the points requiring special attention were the northern Passes of the Hindukush.⁴⁹ The objects in view were declared by the government of India to be watching

45. H.M. Durand to Captain A.G.A. Durand, June 22, 1888, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, September 1888, Nos. 176-190; GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, May 1889, Nos. 544-559.

46. GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, July 1895, Nos. 946-998.

47. GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, May 1889, Nos. 544-559.

48. H.M. Durand to RK, No. 1234 F, August 5, 1889 (Confdl), GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, October 1889, Nos. 104-132; GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, September 1889, Nos. 231-252; Col Algernon Durand, *Making of a Frontier*, hereafter quoted as Col Algernon Durand, 1899, p. 119.

49. SS1 to Government of India, No. 22 (Sec), June 28, 1889, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, October 1889, Nos. 104-132; Col Algernon Durand, p. 119.

and control of the country south of the Hindukush, and organisation of a force which would be able in time of trouble to prevent any coup de main by a small body of troops acting across the Passes.⁵⁰

Since the defence of the Gilgit frontier involved the interests both of the Imperial government and the Kashmir Darbar, the matter relating to its cost was discussed between the two and ultimately it was decided that the expenses of the Gilgit Agency should be partly borne by the Imperial government and partly by the Kashmir State.⁵¹

Thus was the Gilgit Agency re-established and Captain (afterwards Colonel) Durand, in company with Surgeon Robertson and Lieutenant Manners Smith, in anticipation of the Home government's sanction of the measure, left, in April 1889, Calcutta for Srinagar on his way to Gilgit. By the middle of June he started from Srinagar, and when he was three marches out at Gurai, he received word that Gilgit Agency scheme had been sanctioned by the Secretary of State for India.⁵² Durand arrived at Gilgit on July 27, 1889.⁵³

His instructions were that, on arrival at Gilgit he would pay a visit to Hunza and Nagar, to make friends with them, and to counteract the Russian attempts to establish an influence in those parts. He was asked to explain to the Chiefs of those States the wishes of the government of India and to offer them subsidies of Rs. 2000/- each per annum contingent upon cessation of raiding by the people of Hunza of the adjacent regions and grant of free access to their countries by British officers. Captain Durand was required to let the rulers of Hunza and Nagar clearly understand that the British government disapproved of their having any dealings with Russia, and that they could not expect to retain the favour of the British

50. Col Algernon Durand, p. 119-120.

51. J and K State Council Resolution No. XVI of 1st of June 1889, JK 21 of 1889; Col R.P. Nisbet to H.M. Durand, June 4, 1889, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, July 1889, Nos. 43-50, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, July 1895, Nos. 946-998.

52. H.M. Durand to RK, No. 1234 F, August 5, 1889 (Confdl), GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, October 1889, Nos. 104-132.

53. GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, September 1889, Nos. 231-252.

government unless they attended to its wishes in this respect. On the conclusion of his visit to Hunza and Nagar, Durand was to visit Chitral and set on foot the new arrangements there.⁵⁴ And he was, if feasible, to extend his march, and visit the Khans of Dir and Umra Khan of Jandul.⁵⁵

Durand's visit to Hunza and Nagar

On arrival at Gilgit, Captain Durand was well received by the local officials. On the 14th of August, 1889, he was able to start for Nagar, where he and his party arrived on the 19th. The British Agent was cordially received by Raja Jaffer Khan, who readily accepted the stipulations laid down by the government of India in return for the promised subsidy, and showed himself thoroughly well disposed towards the British.⁵⁶

From Nagar, the British Agent crossed the Hunza river to Hunza, where his reception on the first day was all that could be wished. The requirements of the government of India were fully accepted by the Raja, Safdar Ali Khan, though he pointed out that, owing to his having a *jagir in Yarkand, some communication must still be carried on between his State and China. Before Captain Durand left, however, the Chief's conduct under-went a considerable change. On ascertaining that he was to be treated on precisely the same terms as his neighbour, the Nagar Chief, whose position he considered to be of less importance, Raja Safdar Ali Khan appeared dissatisfied at the arrangements proposed, and demanded an allowance of Rs. 500/- per annum for his son in addition to the subsidy of Rs. 2000/- promised to him by the British.⁵⁷

Colonel Durand offered to forward Safdar Ali Khan's request to the government of India, but the Raja continued to

54. H.M. Durand to RK, No. 1234 F, August 5, 1889 (Confdl), GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, October 1889, Nos. 104-132; Col Algernon Durand, p. 121

55. Col Algernon Durand, p. 121.

56. Government of India to SSI, No. 165 of 1889, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, December 1889, Nos. 238-249.

* The Thum (ruler) of Kanjut or Hunza had a jagir near Yarkand—a recognition of the assistance Hunza gave China during an insurrection in Turkestan in 1847 (Knight, E.F, pp. 332-333).

57. Government of India to SSI, No. 165 of 1889, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, December 1889, Nos. 238-249.

send him rude messages and otherwise to behave in an improper manner, and at one time there was some danger of an attack being made on the British party. This was fortunately averted by Colonel Durand's tact and good management, and he was able to leave without being molested. Some days later a letter was received from the Chief apologizing for his conduct containing a distinct assurance that he would abide by the engagements which he had entered into with the British government. But the government of India had reason to believe that Raja Safdar Ali Khan was treacherous and untrustworthy. As however they considered it unadvisable to risk the breakdown of their relations with the Raja at this early period of the re-establishment of the Gilgit Agency, they accepted the recommendations of Colonel Durand and the Resident in Kashmir, and consented to a grant of Rs. 500/- per annum to the Chief's son the continuance of which was dependent upon the Chief's good behaviour.⁵⁸

Durand's Visit to Chitral

From Hunza Colonel Durand and party returned to Gilgit, and after a short stay there, marched to Chitral. On the way some delay was occasioned by the receipt of letters from the Mehtar of Chitral informing the British Agent of a plot on the part of Raja Akbar Khan of Punial, the only honest Chief between Boonji and the Hindukush, and the inhabitants of Darel and Tangir to waylay and murder the whole party. This was an absolute fabrication, the object as it was discovered being to embroil the British Agent with Akbar Khan, who had enmity with the Mehtar, and to impress upon the British government the difficulty the Mehtar was under in keeping order in his State, and the consequent necessity for increasing his subsidy. Information was conveyed to the Mehtar that the British government would hold him responsible if a shot was fired in his territory on the party, and that it would not consider his friendship worth having if he could not guarantee the safety of British officers in his country. No more was naturally heard of the proposed attack, and Chitral was reached on October 17, 1889.⁵⁹

58. *Ibid.*

59. British Agent to RK, December 29, 1889, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, May 1890, Nos. 37-43.

The Mehtar's reception was most cordial, and throughout the stay of the party in Chitral every endeavour was made by him and his sons to ingratiate themselves with the British officers.⁶⁰

The Mehtar readily agreed to the government of India's conditions dependent on the receipt of increased subsidy.* The conditions he agreed upon were, first, his assistance in opening up the Peshawar-Chitral road, second, the improvements of the main paths in his country to tracks passable by laden mules, and third, the fortification of certain selected positions to be afterwards pointed out to him.⁶¹

As to the first stipulation it was more than doubtful if he was sincere in his professions. He undoubtedly wrote to the Chiefs whose territories lay between the British borders and those of Chitral, urging them to comply with the wishes of the government of India, but at the same time he sent verbal messages, advising them to object to the road being open to the passage of troops.

The second point, the improvement of the so-called roads in his country to good mule-tracks, there was not, in the opinion of the British Agent, much difficulty about; and he expected almost the whole road from the Mehtar's border to the town of Chitral to be fit for mule traffic by the year 1890.

As to the third point, the Mehtar was extremely anxious to commence fortifying the positions at once, under the guidance of the British officers, as a visible sign to all his enemies, the Amir of Afghanistan included, of his close alliance with the British government. But the lateness of the season prevented a careful visit of inspection to the points selected, and the matter was allowed to stand over.

60. *Ibid.*

* Consequent upon Durand's visit to Chitral and Aman-ul-Mulk's accepting the above-mentioned stipulations of the British government, the Mehtar's subsidy was fixed at Rs. 30,000 per annum. Out of this Rs. 18,000 were to be paid by the Kashmir State, while the remaining charge was to be met by the government of India. (RK to Vice-President of Kashmir State Council, No. 253, January 22, 1894. JK 69 of 1892).

61. British Agent to RK, December 29, 1889, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, May 1890, Nos. 37-43.

Although the government of India had sanctioned the presentation of 1,000 Snider carbines to the Mehtar, it seemed best to Colonel Durand to limit the gift to 500. For, according to information received by the British party before reaching Chitral, the Mehtar did not in the least expect that his wishes on this point would be gratified. Besides, there appeared to be a growing inclination on his part to engage in hostilities with Umra Khan of Jandul in favour of the Khan of Dir*, and to attack Tangir and possibly Darel**.

Colonel Durand accordingly promised five hundred carbines much to the Mehtar's gratification. Fifty were to be presented in 1889 and the remainder the following spring. The grant was considered to be quite sufficient to strengthen him very materially, and to give him a better chance of holding his own against Umra Khan if they quarrelled, and it was received in

* Umra Khan, Chief of the Jandul State, immediately bordering Chitral on the South, ascended the throne in 1881, and commenced a series of wars against his neighbours, including Chitral. Valley after valley he annexed to his country. Scarcely a month passed by without a fight, and with each success his ambitions only grew wider and stronger. The Chitralis had always looked upon the Pathans of Jandul as their hereditary enemies, and their Mehtars had made persistent attempts at forming a tribal league on behalf of the rulers of Dir against Umra Khan. (Captain, G.J. Younghusband and Captain Frank E. Younghusband, *The Relief of a Chitral*, 1895, pp. 12-19; Sir George Robertson, *Chitral: The Story of Minor Siege*, 1905, p. 18.)

** Tangir and Darel were two of the many independent communities and small democratic states in the narrow hot valleys of the Indus. In these territories everyone was his own master and law and order was unknown. Darel was the more easterly of the two states, wedged in between the Gilgit Wazarat, the Chilas district and the Indus. Tangir was on its west. These States possessed magnificent forests which had fascinated the povertystricken Chiefs of Dardistan. They knew that the merchants of India would willingly and handsomely pay for the fine timber, and the Pathans who specialised in felling and exporting trees could easily come to terms with the owners in the valleys. Both valleys drained into the Indus, and it would be childishly easy to fell the forests and let that great river transport the wood to the merchants. It was such a simple way of making large sums of money and the gains more than compensated for the risks. So by hook or by crook, by fair means or foul, the rulers of the neighbouring states had determined to seize these territories (Colonel R.C. Schomberg, *Between the Oxus and the Indus*, 1935, pp. 234-236).

Chitral, and doubtless in the surrounding States as the most effectual guarantee of the British trust and friendship. At the same time the possession of an extra 500 rifles was not enough to encourage him to enter heedlessly into hostilities either against Umra Khan or the people of Tangir, or to make him too independent. Steps were also taken to impress upon him that, in the interest of maintaining peace, the British government would view with disfavour any attempt on Tangir, and that no interference with Darel would for a moment be allowed.⁶²

Colonel Durand and party stayed in Chitral a week and then left for Gilgit arriving there on November 12, 1889.⁶³

Darbar at Gilgit

Back at Gilgit, Durand, to mark the re-establishment of the British Agency, invited the neighbouring Chiefs to Gilgit. A Darbar was held at which the permanent re-establishment of the Agency was formally announced, and the Chiefs were informed that their subsidies in future would be paid at this, December, time of year, and that their payments would depend on the faithful execution by the recipients of the agreements they had entered into.

The different Rajas returned to their homes having received their subsidies. They all left expressing themselves much pleased with their visit and professing unbounded loyalty to the British government.

Administration in Gilgit

Durand's position presented some of the curious anomalies in the Gilgit Agency. He was the representative of the British government on the frontier, and the external relations with the neighbouring states were under his control. But the rule within the Gilgit border was in the hands of the Kashmir Governor, while the command of the forces rested with the Kashmiri

62. Aman-ul-Mulk to the Viceroy, No. 20, 1889, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, February 1890, Nos. 85-113; British Agent to RK, December 29, 1889, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, May 1890, Nos. 37-43.

63. Raja Ram Singh to RK, November 17, 1889, JK 21 of 1889; Aman-ul-Mulk to the Viceroy, November 20, 1889, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, February 1890, Nos. 85-113.

General, with the proviso that no important move of troops should be undertaken without Durand's sanction. It was a difficult position, for every one recognised that, in addition to his own responsibilities, Durand was really answerable for the proper government and progress of the Gilgit District, and for the discipline and control of the troops.⁶⁴

The difficulty was solved by the formation of an unrecognised committee of Public Safety composed of the Governor, the General, and Colonel Durand. They met two or three times a week and discussed their various schemes, the necessary steps for which were invariably carried out in the name of the Kashmir Darbar and by order of its own officers. Durand and his Kashmiri colleagues were 'very good' friends, and what was required was generally carried through.

For the first few months the Gilgit committee turned their attention mainly to the re-modelling of the Forts occupied by the troops, with the object of replacing the 'foul huts' in them by proper barracks, and of building suitable granaries and stores. Much time and labour was also spent in improving the irrigation channels in the Gilgit District, on which the food supply of the inhabitants and the troops depended. The question of the improvement of the local communications was exhaustively examined.

In the year 1889, Durand had drawn up complete schemes for putting the postal and transport arrangements on a proper footing. The first difficulty was finally solved by including Kashmir in the Imperial postal system of India, the second by placing the whole of the Commissariat and transport arrangements under an officer of the Indian Commissariat Department. These changes were not, however, carried out for another two years, and Durand had to struggle on as before.

On going into the question of supply Durand found that the troops in Gilgit received no issue of salt, clarified butter etc ; and he had another year's struggle with the Kashmir Darbar before this was righted. He did his best for the troops by getting up vegetable seeds from India and starting gardens for them, but this was merely a palliative. Every year, towards

64. Col Algernon Durand, p. 226.

the beginning of spring, scurvy broke out, and the troops suffered seriously, until, when Durand's cultivation had spread, he was able to check it by issuing Lucerne grass to the men to eat as a vegetable.⁶⁵

Construction of Roads

Feeling that the whole secret of supply for the Gilgit troops lay in extending cultivation, Durand had turned his energies to making water channels which would bring thousands of acres of waste land under the plough. To this end he had obtained the services of a Company of Kashmir Sappers under a most excellent and well-trained officer, Major Gokual Chand. They had done a good deal towards improving the irrigation of the valley before Durand realised the full extent of his coming difficulties in supplying the troops. When Durand found out exactly how they stood he took off every available man from this most necessary work, and turned all his strength on to the still more urgent task of improving the existing tracks into paths fit for mule traffic. The necessity for this was evident, Over bad roads coolies could only carry a load of from sixty to eighty pounds, in addition to five day's food for themselves. After the first few days they began to consume what they carried, and could not walk long distances at a time. Mules could carry four and five times as much as men, and only ate twice as much. Roughly stated, that was, the whole problem of supply over frontier roads.⁶⁶

Eighteen miles from Gilgit was the fort of Nomal, which the tribesmen had besieged three years before. For fourteen miles the road was fairly practicable for mules, but four miles were impassable in the summer. In the winter the road ran down into the bed of the river, and mules could use it, but when the snows began melting and poured their floods down the valleys the lower road became impassable, and only men using the upper path could reach Nomal. There were ominous mutterings of a coming storm brewing in Hunza and Nagar, and it was imperative that Durand should be able to move troops to Nomal and reinforce the garrison at a moment's

65. *Ibid.*, pp. 226-232.

66. *Ibid.*, p. 232.

notice. The road was therefore taken in hand in November 1890, and in a couple of months they had driven a good six-foot road through the bad piece. The last hundred yards of the worst bit of cliff nearly broke their hearts, but ultimately they succeeded in linking Nomal with Gilgit. Durand now turned his attention to the bad cliffs between Gilgit and Boonji, and the road further back.

The labour question was an incessant difficulty. The people of the country were very bad at road-making, and moreover had already plenty of work, and Durand had not enough tools to employ, or money to pay, large numbers. He therefore employed his Company of Sappers, and for ten months they worked on the roads practically every day. It was hard on the men, but was absolutely necessary, and Durand did his best by giving them extra food and pay to make it easy for them. The result was excellent; before the passes opened in summer 1891 they had made the road to Nomal, opened a mule road between Gilgit and Boonji, a distance of thirty miles, and run a track practicable for laden animals up most of the six thousand feet of the dreadful Hattu Pir Mountain, besides improving some bridges on the road to Astore.⁶⁷

⁶⁷. *Ibid.*, pp. 232-234.

5

The Hunza and Nagar War

The Circumstances

In May 1891 Uzar Khan, the eldest son of Raja Jaffer Khan of Nagar, a man of turbulent disposition and the virtual ruler of the State, murdered his two younger brothers—Gauri Thum and Malik Din—because he was jealous of their friendship with the British. Thereafter, in concurrence with his father and Safdar Ali Khan, the Raja of Hunza, he wrote an insolent letter to Colonel Durand announcing as to what he had done.¹ Altogether the attitude taken up by Uzar Khan was very defiant, and his aggressive intentions were soon after made more manifest by the information which Colonel Durand received, from several sources, that he intended to seize Chalt and Chaprote.

On the 27th of May, the commandant of the Kashmir garrison of Chalt sent word to Colonel Durand that a Nagar force was advancing to attack the Chalt Fort; and Uzar Khan did in fact bring a number of Nagar tribesmen to Nilt, 6 miles from Chalt, while the people of Hunza gathered at Mayun, on the north bank of the river opposite Nilt.²

Colonel Durand therefore decided at once to make a dash for Chalt. He gave the order at 3 P.M. on May 27, and by dusk two hundred men of the Kashmir Body Guard Regiment were over the rope bridge and on their way, with their full complement of ammunition and rations.

1. Government of India to SSI, No. 4 (front), January 6, 1892, GOI, Fgn, Front-A, January 1892, Nos. 15-130: Col Algernon Durand, pp. 233-234.
2. Government of India to SSI, No. 4 (front), January 6, 1892, GOI, Fgn, Front-A, January 1892, Nos. 15-130.

To cross the guns was a more difficult matter. The Gilgit river was in full flood, a hundred and fifty yards wide, and running like a mill race. The mules they made swim over the river, and their kit and ammunition was crossed by the rope-bridge, but they had to make a raft and cross the guns on that. And by two in the morning the detachment of two guns was safely over.³

There were other things to think of, and selecting a couple of men Durand could trust he started them off as hard as they could go to Chalt, with others to cut the rope bridges over the Hunza river and over a stream which ran into it just above Chalt from the Hunza side. If they succeeded in doing this before Uzar Khan moved, Durand knew that he should forestall the former, for Durand calculated that Uzar Khan would not dare to cross on rafts even if he could, and that it would take several days to repair the bridges. At the same time Durand sent an express to Raja Akbar Khan of Punial, calling on him to turn out his men, and to move across the hills and join him at Nomal. The Gilgit authorities had organised a couple of hundred Puniali levies, who on this and subsequent occasions did Yeoman's service. The moment Durand decided to move, he also sent off a handful of local levies to seize the Chaichar Parri*, a terrible cliff position on the Gilgit side of Chalt, the possession of which was of the utmost value. Once this was in the hands of the Gilgit authorities, their march to Chalt could not be disputed. Knowing the nature of the road between Nomal and Chalt Durand sent an urgent order to Major Gokul to leave all standing on the Hattu Pir, on which he was at work, and to bring his Sappers up by forced marches.⁴

3. Viceroy to SSI, No. 349, June 7, 1891, Lansdowne Papers, Reel No. 4, NAI; Col Algernon Durand to RK, No. 153/184, June 30, 1891, JK 51/A-4 of 1891; British Agency, Gilgit Political Diary for the week ending the 20th June 1891, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, September 1891, Nos. 260-279.

*Called in the Dogri language. A Parri is a place where the road comes to a sheer precipice over-hanging the river, across which a road has to be built upon piles driven into the face of the cliff. Thomson, H.C., *The Chitral Campaign*, 1895, p. 20.

4. Col Durand to RK, No. 153/184, June 30, 1891, JK 51/A-4 of 1891; Col Algernon Durand, pp. 239-240.

A couple of hour's canter in the early morning carried Durand to Nomal, where he found his little army in high feather, and full of fight. At Nomal Durand heard that the Chaichar Parri was in his hands, and in the afternoon they pushed on another six miles before halting for the night. The last part of the road had been so bad that Durand could not bring on the guns, but he turned out every available man of the Nomal garrison and set them to work to improve it, and arranged for the guns to be brought on later. Early next morning they pushed on, being caught up half-way by Raja Akbar Khan and the Puniali levies under their Chiefs, and after a severe march reached Chalt in the afternoon.

At Chalt Durand found that his men had cut the bridges. He made the best dispositions feasible for his 'little' force and sat down to wait events. An attack was threatened the first and second nights, but it did not come off. Durand heard afterwards that his move had come as a complete surprise on Uzar Khan.⁵

The next few days were a little anxious, but each day that passed without Durand's being attacked made for peace. Uzar Khan wanted war, but feared to make it, and his old father and the more sensible men of the country were against fighting. Every hour's delay saw the Gilgit force strengthened, and the chances of an attack on Chalt by the Nagar and Hunza forces being crowned with success rapidly diminished. The guns got through on the third day after Durand's arrival. This strengthened his position very much and he awaited events with equanimity, utilising every moment to improve the road behind him.⁶

After ten days or so of pourparlers the Hunza-Nagar envoys came to Durand's camp in a suitable frame of mind, and they discussed the situation. Both States were for the

5. Viceroy to SSI, No. 349, June 7, 1891, Lansdowne Papers, Reel No. 4, NAI; Viceroy to SSI, No. 1-C, October 25, 1891, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, November 1891, Nos. 130-254; Knight, E.F., p. 354; Col Durand to RK, No. 153/184, June 30, 1891, JK 51/A-4 of 1891; Col Algernon Durand, pp. 240-241.

6. Gilgit Agency Political Diary for the week ending the 20th June 1891, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, September 1891, Nos. 260-279; Col Algernon Durand, pp. 241-242.

moment honestly anxious to avoid war. The fort of Chalt though contemptible from the military point of view, was now three times as strong as the Gilgit force had found it. It was garrisoned by picked Kashmir troops amply provisioned, and last, but not least, they had driven a road through the Chaichar Parri. Durand had earlier been told through a message that any attempt to make a road, or to strengthen the fort, would inevitably lead to war, that the tribes looked on Chalt "as on the strings of their wives' Paijamas", but by a timely move Durand had prevented war, strengthened the hold of Kashmir on its frontier posts, and made it easy to reach them. The first and most important step towards curbing the tribesmen and barring the road to their raids had been taken, and without firing a shot.⁷

The vakil sent by Safdar Ali Khan of Hunza assured Colonel Durand in his master's name of Safdar Ali's loyalty, and disclaimed all intention to attack Chalt or Chaprote. The emissary from Jaffer Khan disclaimed any connection with Uzar Khan or his acts, and promised that, if the guns and troops were withdrawn to Gilgit, Uzar Khan would be kept from giving further trouble. Colonel Durand formally accepted these assurances, but he took the opportunity of warning the Hunza and Nagar vakils publicly, in the presence of the troops, and of some neighbouring Chiefs and headmen,⁸ that any further attack on Chalt, Chaprote and the villages connected with those places, or the presence of any armed parties on the road between Chalt and Nomal,⁹ would be regarded by the Darbar and the British government as an act of hostility, and punished accordingly. The vakils were then dismissed, and after having left a sufficient force at Chalt, Colonel Durand returned to Gilgit.¹⁰

7. Knight, E.F., p. 334; Col Algernon Durand, pp. 242-243.

8. Government of India to SSI, No. 4 (Front), January 6, 1892, GOI, Fgn, Front-A, January 1892, Nos. 15-130.

9. British Agency, Gilgit, Official Diary ending the 20th of June 1891, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, September 1891, Nos. 260-279.

10. Government of India to SSI, No. 4 (Front), January 6, 1892, GOI, Fgn, Front-A, January 1892, Nos. 15-130.

The storm was for the moment averted, but Durand had no hope that the settlement was permanent, for he knew that Uzar Khan had his ambition to make himself master of Chalt, and that the Hunza Chief had been busy breaking every one of the terms of engagement he had earlier entered into with the British government. The latter was still raiding across the northern Passes;* a band of his ruffians had the insolence to kidnap a Kashmiri subject at Nomal and to sell him into slavery on the Pamirs; he had received Chinese officials in his country, and had invited the Russians into it. And the Gilgit authorities had further serious causes of complaint.

In other ways than those mentioned above Durand's move had been a success. The Puniali levies were radiant at the Gilgit authorities having forestalled Uzar Khan, and occupied the Chaichar Parri without striking a blow. The news spread through the country-side like a wild fire, the prestige of the Kashmir troops and their own which was connected with it rose with a bound, and they felt confidence in British leadership and fortune.¹¹

Durand's visit to Simla

In consequence of Durand's reports as to the condition of the frontier, and of the difficulties likely to arise with Hunza and Nagar.¹² war with which had only been averted by his dash to Chalt, and the evident need of coming to a definite conclusion in regard to the manner in which these States were to be treated for the future, the government of India summoned him to India in order that they might consult him personally in the matter. Meanwhile, at his request, the government of India had despatched three officers of Gilgit, where they arrived in July. Colonel Durand left Gilgit on the 7th of August and reached Simla on the 31st.

At this time Colonel Durand had within the limits of his charge three Regiments of Infantry, a mule Battery, and a

*For further details see Major John Biddulph, p. 28.

11. Memo by Algernon Durand, dated September 4, 1891, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, November 1891, Nos. 130-254; Knight, E.F., pp. 353-354; Col Algernon Durand, p. 343.

12. Memo by Algernon Durand, British Agent at Gilgit, September 4, 1891, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, November 1891, Nos. 130-254.

small force of Sappers and Miners, belonging to the Kashmir army, besides irregular troops. With this force, Colonel Durand had to garrison places as far apart as Astore and Cher Kila. The British Agent and his Assistants had to supervise the drill and instruction of the troops, which were scattered in numerous detachments, and this work was heavy. It was made heavier by the great difficulty in collecting and transporting supplies for the force.¹³

The government of India had already, as above stated, sent three officers to Colonel Durand's assistance, but their discussions with him convinced them that the assistance which had thus been afforded would not be enough, at all events during the winter months. In view of possible aggression on the part of Hunza and Nagar, and of the outbreak of hostilities, they decided that it was necessary to strengthen materially the British Agent's staff of officers, and also his escort of British troops. They arranged to give Colonel Durand a staff consisting of fourteen officers exclusive of those attached to his escort, and to send up to him 200 men from the 2nd Battalion of the 5th Gurkhas, and two guns of a native mountain Battery.

This assistance in officers and men gave Colonel Durand a small nucleus of regular troops, and it admitted of his attaching three British officers to each of the Kashmir Infantry Regiments. Colonel Durand subsequently asked for a Gatling gun, which was also supplied.

The next question which required the government of India's attention and the issue of instructions to the Gilgit Agency was the manner in which Colonel Durand was to deal with the Hunza and Nagar Chiefs. The latter had gravely misconducted himself, and the former had defiantly broken his engagements with the British. The Acting British Agent, Lieutenant Manners Smith, had however written to the Hunza Chief, while Colonel Durand was in Simla, in terms which might be held to have condoned his previous conduct, and the government of India, loath to force any quarrel upon Hunza, considered that if

13. Lansdowne to Viscount Cross, September 15, 1891, Lansdowne Papers, Reel No. 4, NAI; Government of India to SSI, No. 4 (Front), January 6, 1892, GOI, Fgn, Front-A, January 1892, Nos. 15-130.

Safdar Ali Khan did not renew his misbehaviour it would not be necessary to take any punitive action against him. But it was evident that he might resent the further improvement of the road between Gilgit and Chalt, which was a necessity. The British government could not, with due regard to the position of the Kashmir Darbar and to their own interests, acquiesce in a state of affairs by which, in defence to the Chief's objections, the Chalt position was to be left insecure. Moreover, they agreed with Colonel Durand, and the Resident in Kashmir, Colonel Prideaux, in thinking that it was necessary for the peace and security of the districts under the Gilgit Agency that the Hunza and Nagar States should be induced for the future to fulfil their engagements and should generally be brought under proper control.¹⁴

Having regard to all the circumstances of the case, the government of India instructed Colonel Durand to move troops at the end of October to Chalt and to improve the road between that place and Gilgit. He was told to write, at the same time, to the Chiefs of Hunza and Nagar, saying nothing about their former misconduct, but informing them that it was necessary for their safety and that of Kashmir, that the British should have free access to their territory, in order to make all requisite arrangements for holding the line of frontier. They were to be told that there was no intention to interfere in the form of their government, but that the British arrangements would include the making of military roads; that in the case of Nagar, the British must make a practicable mule road as far as Nagar itself; and, that in the case of Hunza, they must make one from Chalt to Hunza, and so much farther as might seem necessary, in order to give them the command of the Hindu-kush Passes. Finally, Colonel Durand was to inform the Chiefs that, since they owed allegiance to the British government, they would be expected to give any aid in their power.¹⁵

If the Chiefs refused to allow the roads to be made, they were to be informed that the government of India could not accept their refusal, that the roads must be made, and that,

14. Government of India to SSI, No. 4 (Front), January 6, 1892, GOI, Fgn, Front-A, January 1892, Nos. 15-130.

15. *Ibid.*

unless they complied with the demands made upon them, troops would enter their country, and make the roads in spite of them. In this case Durand had orders to move across the frontier.

In the meanwhile, it was possible that Raja Safdar Ali Khan might, if he heard of the small body of the additional troops being sent up to Gilgit, precipitate events by a hostile movement before they could arrive. The government of India therefore instructed the Acting British Agent at Gilgit to secure the Chaichar Parri. There was of course some risk that any such movement on the part of the Acting Agent might bring on the trouble which it was intended to avert, but the British government were clearly within their rights in securing the safety of Chalt, and in the circumstances of the case this risk had to be faced.¹⁶

Durand Returns to Gilgit

Durand left Simla for Gilgit in October, but took quite some time before he reached his destination. After he crossed the Burzil Pass and arrived at Astore, he found himself in difficulties. The arrangements for the supply of the Gilgit force in the year 1891 had been put by the Darbar into the hands of a great contractor in the Punjab, totally ignorant of the conditions existing on the frontier, and of the nature of the roads over which transport had to work. His arrangements had absolutely broken down, nine-tenths of the grain and stores were lying at Astore, and the contractor's agent was waiting Durand's arrival at that place utterly helpless. Again Durand was thrown on to his own resources, but this year the difficulties to be solved were greater than usual. War on the frontier was almost a certainty, and in addition to the Kashmir Brigade Durand had to feed two hundred of the British men, a section of a mule Battery, and some thousands of coolies he brought afresh. He spent a few days at Astore trying to evolve order out of Chaos. He ordered Manners-Smith from Gilgit to Iskardu in Baltistan to collect coolies and send them to Astore, placed an officer in charge of the transport, granaries and stores at the latter place, and scattered others along the road to act as transport officers. All responded well to the calls Durand made on them, and in little over a month he had a sufficiency of grain

and stores landed at Gilgit at the expense of tremendous exertions on the part of officers and men, and of considerable suffering to coolies and transport animals.¹⁷

After making all these arrangements Durand pushed on rapidly to Gilgit, and was not altogether pleased with the situation which awaited him there. There were fresh persistent rumours of an intended attack on Chalt, and the garrison of that post had been allowed to fall short of food supplies. Foreseeing the necessity which might arise for rapidly preparing flour for the troops, Durand had given orders for a number of water-mills to be constructed; not one had been built. However, if there were shortcomings on the one hand, on the other there was cause for satisfaction. The two best Kashmir Regiments, under the careful instruction of Durand's staff officer, Captain Twigg, and of Captain Townshend had made rapid strides in training and discipline and were in fairly efficient condition.

It was a time of stress and anxiety, and Durand sent pressing representations to Kashmir, urging that every effort should be made to push on stores and munitions of war to Astore. Late as the season was, Durand kept a thousand mules working between Astore and Boonji for another month, at the risk of having the Passes closed behind them, and of having to sacrifice a great number, for he had no fodder to keep them during the winter. They were sent back late in November, and got through to Kashmir after great hardships, but with no serious loss.¹⁸

Durand had obtained the services of a lot of boatmen and boat-builders from Attock, in the Punjab, men accustomed to dealing with the Indus in flood, and with their help had built several good boats, and established a ferry across the Indus above Boonji. But, great as their help was, it would have been but of little use but for the talent of Captain Aylmer, R.E.; who had come up with Durand. Aylmer, with telegraph wire and such frail timbers and scraps of wood as they could hastily collect, in three weeks after his arrival, built a temporary bridge

17. Government of India to SSI, No. 4 (Front), January 6, 1892, GOI Fgn, Front-A, January 1892, Nos. 15-130; Col Algernon Durand, pp. 246-248.

18. Col Algernon Durand, pp. 248-249.

over the Astore river, another over the Gilgit river, and established a wire-rope ferry over the Indus, which worked the big boats, and crossed hundreds of tons of grain and military stores, and thousands of baggage animals and coolies.

By the middle of November all was ready. The necessary troops were collected at Gilgit, and Durand had a month's supply in hand, and more coming in daily. But the position was not without elements of risk. To the south the Indus valley tribes, as usual on the approach of winter, were discussing the advisability of forming strong coalition, and of attacking Boonji. If the Gilgit authorities failed in Hunza and Nagar, Durand knew that this attack would come off. He had, therefore, to place some troops at Boonji, and on the road near it, guarding the line of communication with Astore, where his grain reserves were, and holding the posts at bridges and ferries.¹⁹

No one on the frontier believed in the possibility of a peaceful settlement of the British differences with Hunza and Nagar. These states were arming. Confident in the strength of their defiles, and of their power to seize Chalt, and to defeat Kashmir troops as of Yore, they meditated seizing the Chaichar Parri, and possibly besieging Nomal. A spy of theirs had been captured near Nomal, and gave valuable information as to the intended move. He confessed that he had been sent to discover with what force the Gilgit authorities were holding the Chaichar Parri. He also revealed another scheme of the tribesmen, by which they hoped to surprise Chalt. A number of men concealing their arms about their persons and carrying loads on their backs, so that they might be taken for coolies from Gilgit, were to march up to the unsuspecting sepoy, and fall upon them when they had gained admittance within the fort. Seeing that the Kanjutis in dress and appearance were exactly like Astoris and Gilgitis, and that the garrison of Chalt at that time was composed of Kashmir troops alone, it was not impossible that they would have successfully carried out this ingenious plan.²⁰

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 249-250.

20. Government of India to SSI, No. 4 (Front), January 6, 1892, GOI, Fgn. Front-A, January 1892, Nos. 15-130; Knight, E. F, pp. 345-346; Col Algernon Durand, pp. 250-251.

The tribesmen were thus collecting for a dash, and the time had come to advance. The detachment of the 5th Gurkhas and the two guns of the Hazara mountain Battery were accordingly moved to Chalt, and the improvement of the road behind them was undertaken. Mr. Spedding, the head of the firm of contractors which was making the road from Gilgit to Kashmir, had placed his European staff and a body of picked Pathan labourers at Durand's disposal, and they did splendid work on the road, and subsequently advanced with the force beyond Chalt as far as Nilt.

A few days before Durand started the remainder of his force to the front he wrote an order appointing George Robertson Chief Political Officer to the force, in the event of the command passing out of his hands.²¹

By the end of November Durand's troops were concentrated at Chalt, and he moved there himself. He had for some time been in constant communication with the Chiefs, and had exhausted every means of persuasion by letter, and by the mouth of trusted envoys, in the hopes of arriving at a peaceful solution, but in vain. Finally, on the 29th of November, Durand sent in his ultimatum to the Chiefs who were with their forces, Safdar Ali Khan of Hunza at Mayun, and Uzar Khan at Nilt, about eight miles from his camp. He gave them three days to think it over, but on the second his envoy returned on foot, having been robbed of his horse, insulted, and threatened with murder, and informed him that the Chiefs had decided to fight. The Nagar Chief wished for peace, but Uzar Khan and the war party were too strong for him to resist. The Hunza Wazir, Dadu, has drawn his sword during the deliberations, and sworn to kill the first man who spoke of agreeing to the British demands. The answer from Nagar was firm and dignified, that of the Hunza Chief was couched in the most insulting terms.²²

21. *The Gazette of India*, Military Department, April 29, 1892, JK 51/A-4 of 1891; Col Algernon Durand, p. 251.

22. Viceroy to SSI, No. 715, December 8, 1891, Lansdowne Papers, Reel No. 3, NAI; Government of India to SSI, No. 4 (Front), January 6, 1892, GOI, Fgn, Front-A, January 1892, Nos. 15-130; Col Algernon Durand. pp. 251-252; Knight, E.F., p. 360.

Curious imagery was employed in these documents. In one of his earlier letters Safdar Ali Khan of Hunza asked why the British strayed thus into his country 'like camels without nose-rings'. In another letter he declared that he cared nothing for the womanly English, as he hung upon the skirts of the mainly Russians, and he warned Colonel Durand that he had given orders to his followers to bring him the British Agent's head on a platter. In yet another letter the Thum somewhat shifted his ground, and spoke of other friends : "I will withstand you, if I have to use bullets of gold. If you venture here, be prepared to fight three nations—Hunza, China and Russia. We will cut your head off, Colonel Durand, and then report to the Indian government."²³

Course of the War

Negotiations having thus broken down, the Gilgit force, on December 1, crossed the Hunza river above Chalt and bivouacked on what was now the enemy's ground.²⁴ The Hunza-Nagar Field Force, as it was henceforth called, was constituted thus : 188 men of the 5th Gurkhas ; 28 men of the 20th Punjab Infantry ; 76 men of the Hazara Mountain Battery ; 7 Bengal Sappers and Miners ; and 661 Imperial Service Troops (257 from the Raghu Pertap, or 1st Kashmir Infantry Regiment, and 404 from the Body Guard, or 2nd Kashmir Rifles) : in all, about 1,000 regular troops. In addition to these were the irregulars—the Punialis and Spedding's Pathans. Two thousand Balti coolies performed bulk of the transport service. Sixteen British officers accompanied the Field Force. On December 2 the force advanced and captured the fort of Nilt, the first in Nagar territory.²⁵

The fort was one of great strength, placed at the junction of two precipitous cliffs several hundred feet high, which formed the banks of the Hunza river, and of a great ravine which here ran into it. Owing to the configuration of the ground, the fort could not be properly seen till the force was within 300 yards of it. The walls of the fort were of solid stone, cemented by

23. Knight, E.F, p. 361.

24. Col Algernon Durand, p. 252.

25. *The Gazette of India*, Military Department, April 29, 1892, JK 51/A-4 of 1891.

mud and strengthened by large timbers. In front of the main wall ran a loopholed wall completely hiding the gate-way; before this again, was a very deep ditch encumbered with abattis and a broad band of abattis filled the space intervening between the ditch and a precipitous spur projecting from the mountain above into the narrow strip of cultivated land before the fort.²⁶

Although this mountain was crowned with Infantry, guns could not be taken up, and the fire of the Infantry could not touch the defenders of the fort, who were under perfect cover. The attack had therefore to be delivered straight to the front over a space narrowing to a width of about sixty yards. The guns, though admirably served, could make no impression on the walls, and the fort was assaulted by the detachment of the 1-5th Gurkha Rifles, and carried after Captain Aylmer had blown in the main gate. The brunt of the fighting fell on the detachment 1-5th Gurkha Rifles, for from the nature of the ground the troops in support could be of little use. The Gurkhas behaved with their usual gallantry and dash, and the Kashmir Imperial Service Troops showed remarkable coolness.

The casualties amounted to three British officers, including Colonel Durand, wounded, three men killed, three mortally wounded, and one native officer and twenty-two non-commissioned officers and men wounded. The tribesmen suffered a loss of over 80 killed and many wounded.

Captain Bradshaw succeeds to the Command

Colonel Durand, after being wounded, gave command of the force to Captain Bradshaw. Before retirement he had given orders that Captain C.J. Mackenzie, with 20 men of the 20th Bengal Infantry and the Punial Levy under their own Rajas should, after seizing the heights above the fort, attempt to cross the great ravine and turn the enemy's position, and that the moment the fort fell, the Body-Guard Regiment of the Imperial Service Troops, who were in reserve, should follow the flying enemy and carry any defences on the opposite bank of the nala.

26. Lt. Col A. Durand, Commanding Hunza-Nagar Field Force to Adjutant-General in India, No. 249, January 27, and February 6, 1892 GOI, Fgn, Front-B, July 1892, Nos. 44-47.

The precipitous sides of the ravine, the paths in which had been destroyed by the tribesmen, prevented Captain Mackenzie from carrying out Durand's intention ; while Captain Bradshaw came to the conclusion that any forward move was that day impossible.²⁷

The force was, therefore, halted for the night at Nilt. In front of it was the great ravine running from the river-bed to the glaciers some thousands of feet above. The far bank was lined with sangars, which commanded every possible track up it. Its height varied from six hundred feet, where it joined the river bank, to twelve hundred feet, and it was absolutely precipitous. To the left of the force ran the Hunza river, on the opposite bank of which was the strongly fortified place of Mayun, standing on the high cliff of the river, and full of men. Half a mile up the river, on the left bank, was a strongly fortified Ziarat, from which to the junction of the great ravine ran one continuous line of sangars. During the night all the sangars were strongly reinforced, and those exposed to shell fire were provided with such heavy roofs as to defy the seven pounders.

On the Gilgit side the edge of the ravine was held by a line of picquets up to the snow line, the Punial Levy holding the upper positions.²⁸

On the morning of the 3rd December an advance was attempted towards Mayun, but after a loss of one man killed and seven wounded, including Lieutenant Gorton, Royal Artillery, was abandoned. Every sangar on the opposite hill was held in great force ; the path leading down from the fort was precipitous, impassable for mules and swept from end to end by a searching fire ; while the path by which the Hunza-Nagaris had fled when the Nilt fort was occupied, and which ran up a cliff on to the cultivated land above the river, had been broken away and encumbered with abattis. It was, moreover, barred by a large sangar, holding about a hundred men, which during the night had been so strengthened as to be bomb-proof.

27. *Ibid.*

28. *The Gazette of India*, Military Department, April 29, 1892, JK 51/A-4 of 1891.

The position was one of great difficulty. The Gilgit force was very small, and before it was an enemy many times more numerous than itself, holding a position of enormous natural strength and heavily entrenched. To attack the lower sangar with any chance of success seemed impossible, while an advance up the river-bed against the strongly fortified Ziarat position under a raking cross fire from both banks of the river, though feasible with a large force, must have led to very heavy loss; and a very heavy loss, which would necessarily have involved many casualties amongst the British officers, already none too many, was not to be forced, except as the last recourse.²⁹

For seventeen days the little Gilgit force therefore remained stationary. It was evident that only two courses remained i.e; the first to transfer the force to the right bank of the river and storm Mayun; the second to storm the opposite bank of the ravine. A force was crossed on the night of the 12th to capture Mayun, but the attempt offered such difficulties in the darkness that it was given up. Night after night a few men of the Body-Guard Regiment, who volunteered for the dangerous service, explored the precipice for a road. The task was one of great danger, for at the least noise a heavy fire was opened, and, what was far more dangerous, avalanches of rock, started by the holders of the sangars above, thundered down the cliff into the ravine below.

After many nights of patient searching, a Dogra sepoy of the Body Guard Regiment named Nagdu, discovered a practicable path, and an assault on Mayun was resolved on. The command had developed on Captain Colin J. Mackenzie, Seaforth Highlanders, in the temporary absence of Captain Bradshaw, who had come to Gilgit to see Durand on the question of supply.³⁰

During the night of the 19th a hundred men of the Body-Guard were moved silently into the ravine, accompanied by Lieutenants J. Manners Smith and Taylor, the former of whom

29. *Ibid.*

30. Lt. Col Algernon Durand, Commanding Hunza-Nagar Field Force to the Adjutant-General in India, No. 249, January 27 and February 6, 1892, GOI, Fgn, Front-B, July 1892, Nos. 44-47.

was to lead the assault. On the morning of the 20th four parties of picked shots were moved on to the British bank of the ravine, and with the guns opened such a well-aimed fire on the four sangars guarding the path by which the storming party was to ascend, that not a man could show himself. Shortly after the fire was opened, Lieutenant Smith led of his party of 50 men, followed by Lieutenant Taylor with the rest. At first a wrong direction was taken, and after an arduous climb Lieutenant Smith found his way barred by a sheer precipice absolutely impassable for his men ; descending several hundred feet, he again led his men up, and after another hour of hard climbing neared the top. The fire had been so well directed that the holders of the sangars were unaware of the danger which threatened them until the small party was observed from Mayun, and word was passed across the river and up the mountain side. Showers of stones were then thrown from the inside of the sangars, and crashed down over the storming party; but it had by this time passed the most dangerous points on the cliff, and was in safety. Lieutenant Smith, collecting a handful of his men, dashed forward, carried the nearest sangar, and in so doing assured the success of the expedition ; for, as more men arrived at the top of the cliff, sangar after sangar was carried, and the roof set fire to. The rising smoke was the signal for a general flight ; the defenders of Mayun streamed away in hundreds. Wazir Dadu, Safdar Ali Khan and Uzar Khan, bolted from the Ziarat, and did not halt till they had put the Passes of the Hindukush between them and the British troops ; and the defenders of the positions on the Nagar bank broke up and fled for their homes. Imperialist loss in this brilliant attack, led up a precipice, at this point 1200 feet in height, with consummate skill and daring by Lieutenant Smith, amounted to only two men wounded. Loss on the side of the tribesmen was heavy, and amounted to over 100 men killed and wounded, with 118 prisoners.³¹

An immediate advance was made by the force, and receiving on the way the complete submission of the Raja of Nagar, Captain Mackenzie occupied Nagar on the 21st, and on the 22nd the Raja of Hunza having fled, the Hunza people made

31. *Ibid.*

submission, and surrendered the fort of Hunza into the British hands.

All resistance being broken down, active operations ceased on the 22nd. The direction of affairs then passed to G.S. Robertson, the Chief Political Officer. Under his instruction³² a force of 100 Kashmir troops under three British officers started, on the 25th, towards the Kilik Pass in pursuit of the fugitives. The march was arduous, and the British force only reached the foot of the pass on the 30th, and being obliged to abandon the pursuit there, returned to Hunza on January 6, 1892.³³

Durand resumed command of the force on the 7th, and on the 10th the Hunza-Nagar Field Force was broken up.³⁴ A garrison of two hundred and eighty men was left to preserve order in the conquered territories³⁵, and the rest of the force returned to Gilgit on the 11th.³⁶

Retention of the above force in Hunza and Nagar was thought to be necessary, because Safdar Ali Khan, his Wazir, Dadu, and Uzar Khan, with their well armed followers, variously estimated at from two to five hundred men, were at this time on the Tagdumbash Pamir. Their presence just across the mountain was a standing menace. All of the above mentioned leaders were attempting to communicate with the Russians. And the latter were making endeavours to furnish arms to Safdar Ali Khan. The opportunity of raising disturbances in Hunza and Nagar was too inviting to be thrown away by the Russians. And they could accomplish this objective of

32. Viceroy to SSI, No. 769, December 30, 1891, Lansdowne Papers, Reel No. 4, NAI; Lt. Col A.G. Durand, Commanding Hunza-Nagar Field Force to Adjutant-General in India, No. 249, January 27 and February 6, 1892, GOI, Fgn, Front-B, July 1892, Nos. 44-47.

33. Captain H.L., Nevill, *Campaign on the North-West Frontier*, 1912, p. 143.

34. *The Gazette of India*, Military Department, April 29, 1892, JK. 51/A-4 of 1891.

35. Lt. Col Durand to RK, No. 86-10, January 20, 1892, (Confdl), GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, March 1892, Nos. 185-194.

36. Nevill, Captain H.L., *Campaign on the North-West Frontier*, 1912, p. 143.

theirs by instigating the refugees in question to make on-sets on Hunza.

The main body of the force referred to above was stationed at Hunza itself, and a detachment held the extremely strong position of Khaibar, four marches from Hunza, which barred all the roads from the Passes leading northwards on to the Pamirs, and covered the road into the Shimshal valley from Hunza.³⁷

This force remained in Hunza until 1897 when it was replaced by Hunza-Nagar levies.³⁸

Political Arrangements in Hunza and Nagar

Raja Jaffer Khan of Nagar had been led into armed opposition by the influence of his son, Uzar Khan. Jaffer Khan himself took no leading part in the Hunza-Nagar war, and, as soon as he was free from the control of his son, made, as has been seen before, unqualified submission to the Kashmir troops. The government of India, therefore, appointed him temporary Governor of Nagar. The situation in Hunza, however, was not so plain, or so easily dealt with. Safdar Ali Khan, the Raja, himself headed the opposition to the authority of the superior State of Kashmir and was now a fugitive, while there was not in Hunza any member of the ruling family who could at this time be entrusted with the government of the State. In these circumstances the government of India consented to the temporary appointment, as Governor, of Wazir Humayun, half-brother and rival of Dadu. This Wazir Humayun was minister in the days of Raja Ghazan Khan, Safdar Ali's father, and therefore knew the country and the people; and could be expected to work loyally, in the interests of the Kashmir Darbar, and to counteract the evil influence of his half brother.³⁹

Jaffer Khan and Humayun, however, were to act under the

37. Lt-Col Durand to RK, No. 86-10, January 20, 1892 (Confdl), GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, March 1892, Nos. 185-194.

38. C. Collin Davies, *Problem of the North-West Frontier, 1890-1908*, 1932, p. 83.

39. Government of India to Viscount Cross, No. 43, March 16, 1892, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, March 1892, Nos. 185-194; RK to Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir, No. 860, March 16, 1892, JK 23 of 1892.

directions of Captain Stewart who was deputed as political officer to Hunza. He was given, on January 7, 1892, the following instructions by G.S. Robertson :—

1. He was to be the official medium between the officer commanding the garrison and the country people of all ranks.

2. He was to consider himself the protector of the Hunza-Nagar people, and in this character was to bring to the notice of the officer commanding garrison any irregularities on the part of the troops to the conquered population, and see that any such acts were stoned for.

3. He was to obtain supplies of all kinds for the troops from the villages. In doing this he was to beware of his subordinates acting unjustly or oppressively. There was at that time less than a month's supply in the Hunza Fort for three hundred men. It was thought well to make arrangements at once for increasing this. If, on enquiry, he had reason to believe that the Hunza people's surplus store of grain was exhausted and the seed grain was being trenched upon, he was to try and obtain supplies from Nagar on payment. If this source also failed, he was required to report the matter to Gilgit at once for orders. He was required to see that there was always twenty days' rations in hand at Hunza.

4. All supplies of every kind were to be paid for, at that time, by certificates of value to be cashed at Gilgit, or when treasure reached Hunza, afterwards all payments were to be in cash.

5. He was to encourage the people to give up their arms; but he was on no account to permit any one to be beaten, or punished in any way on the plea that he was concealing weapons, or for the sake of an example.

6. He was to bear in mind that British policy was to conciliate the people in every possible way in addition to treating all with strict justice. By this means they could hope to keep the people loyal to them, and could induce runaways to return to their homes. In this connection he was to see that 'begar' was allowed on no pretence whatever, and that no one was compelled to sell anything against his wish. Also that the women of the country were not molested in any way.

7. If he received overtures from the ex-Thum Safdar Ali Khan for his return to Hunza, he was to reply that as a preliminary there must be a complete surrender and giving up of all arms, as was the case with Jaffer Khan; that he could offer the ex-Thum no terms but, as the British government "never personally injures prisoners", he could guarantee him his life as well as the lives of his followers.

8. He was to keep an official diary and report daily to Gilgit.⁴⁰

Significance of the War

This little Hunza-Nagar War proved to be of great significance. It resulted in a thorough defeat of Hunza and Nagar. These States had defied the Kashmir Darbar for many years, and regarded themselves as beyond the reach of punishment. But the Gilgit force of less than a thousand men completely broke their power, and occupied their capitals in three weeks from the outbreak of hostilities.⁴¹ This nemesis had such a lasting effect, that these States remained perfectly loyal to the Gilgit authorities throughout the remaining period of our study.⁴²

Secondly, the expedition did good to the people of these States by putting to flight men like Safdar Ali Khan, Wazir Dadu and Uzar Khan, who were so oppressive as to compel their subjects to fight against their enemies against their wishes, and so irresponsible and callous as to "set fire to as many villages as possible consuming the winter food supplies of their own people" as they fled the country. Their discomfiture in the war and subsequent flight to the north was naturally a good riddance to their subjects, who, after their countries were occupied, felt contented and cheerful,⁴³ and begged that no Raja should be put over them.⁴⁴

40. G.S. Robertson, Acting British Agent, Gilgit, to RK, January 16, 1892, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, March 1892, Nos. 185-194.

41. Government of India to SSI, No. 4 (Front), January 6, 1892, GOI, Fgn, Front-A, January 1892, Nos. 15-130.

42. Nevill, Captain H.L., *Campaign on the North-West Frontier*, 1912, p. 144.

43. Government of India to SSI, No. 4 (Front), January 6, 1892, GOI, Fgn, Front-A, January 1892, Nos. 15-130.

44. Col W.F. Prideaux to SGI, Fgn, No. 59-515, February 15, 1892, (Confdl), GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, March 1892, Nos. 185-194.

Thirdly, the war helped the Hunza-Nagaris yet in another way. The subsidies hitherto paid to the rulers of these States by the Indian government and the Kashmir Darbar were stopped*, and the savings so effected began to be spent on the execution of schemes of construction of roads and on similar works of public utility in these territories.⁴⁵

Fourthly, the war gave the government of India an opportunity of testing the troops which the Maharaja of Kashmir had organised under the Imperial Service scheme since its inauguration in 1888. The operations against the Hunza-Nagar States was the first occasion upon which the Imperial Service Troops of a native State were called upon to take the field. The bulk of the force employed in this war was composed of the Kashmir State troops of the Imperial Service Corps,⁴⁶ and the gallantry and loyalty these men displayed in the field of operations proved that the scheme in question was, at least in the case of the Jammu and Kashmir State, successful.

Fifthly and finally, the occupation of Hunza and Nagar barred Russia's path to these States, which relieved government of India's anxiety on this account. In fact, by occupying Hunza the British "had slammed the door in the face of the Russians".⁴⁷

The intrepidity of officers and men during the operations was fittingly rewarded. Aylmer, Boisragon, and Manners-Smith received the Victoria Cross, and a number of Orders of Merit, the equivalent to the Victoria Cross in the native army,

* The Government of India stopped the subsidies because these were granted on certain conditions, not one of which, had been adequately fulfilled, and their continued payment implied a condonation of acts which had drawn down merited punishment upon the Chiefs. Also, now that Hunza and Nagar were occupied, the objects for which these subsidies were paid could be obtained more effectually and more directly than by their instrumentality, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, March 1892, Nos. 185-194.

45. Col Prideaux to SGI, Fgn, No. 59-515, February 15, 1892, (Confdl), GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, March 1892, Nos. 185-194; JK 23 of 1892.

46. Government of India to SSI, No. 4 (Front), January 6, 1892, GOI, Fgn, Front-A, January 1892, Nos. 15-130; Brigadier-General Stuart Beatson, *A History of the Imperial Service Troops of Native States*, 1903, p. 83. For details see Chapter IX.

47. Col Algernon Durand, p. 264.

were distributed among the rank and file. Besides, the government of India also created the Maharaja of Kashmir a Grand Commander of the Most Exalted Order of the Star of India, while Raja Ram Singh, the Maharaja's younger brother and Commander-in-Chief of the Kashmir army, received the honour of a Companion of the Bath, for their loyal services during the campaign.⁴⁸

48. AAR, 1891-92; Col Algernon Durand, pp. 264-265.

6

The Indus Valley Rising

Tribes of the Indus Valley

Looking down the Indus from Boonji, there were on the right bank of the river three independent Shin republics—Gor, Darel and Tangir; on the left bank, some forty miles below Boonji, was the Shin republic of Chilas.¹ The Chilasis had been, as has been seen in Chapter I, confirmed disturbers of the peace of old, and had raided into Kashmir territories much to the detriment of the valleys between Astore and Kashmir proper, some of which had been practically ruined and depopulated in consequence of their incursions. In 1851 the Kashmir Darbar had in retaliation invaded Chilas and captured the principal fort. Since that time the Chilasis had been tributary to Kashmir, and an agent of the Darbar's had resided amongst them. Despite that, however, the Chilasis never ceased to create trouble in the Agency territories. They were bigoted Sunni Mohamedans, much under the influence of the Mullahs from Swat who visited the country.

Gor, the smallest of the republics, lay nearest Boonji, and was a group of village forts perched thousands of feet above the Indus. The people were quiet and inoffensive, and much in fear of the Chilasis, who in any raids in the Gilgit direction had to pass through their territory. The fighting force of Gor was insignificant, and the little State was tributary to Kashmir. The next republic was Darel; it was more important than Gor, and could turn out from a thousand to fifteen hundred men. The Darbar troops had in 1866 penetrated into the country, the people of which had made submission, and every year hostages

1. Col Algernon Durand, p. 272.

were sent in to Kashmir, and a small tribute paid. Tangir, which lay next, was about equal in importance to Darel.² In 1846 Gaur Aman, ruler of Yasin, invaded Tangir. The people of the country were worsted, and agreed to pay tribute to Yasin. They preserved their independence, nonetheless jealously, and it was to save interference and occupation that they pretended to be the vassals of Yasin.³ Below these tribes stretched a band of country inhabited by Kohistanis of different clans until the Pathan border was reached.⁴

Colonel Durand's Exodus to, and return from, Simla

In May 1892 Colonel Durand left Gilgit for Simla. He remained at the latter place some time, and having settled his business, prepared to go home on leave. He was on the point of starting when the news came that there had been unrest in the Indus valley, that the Chilasis had committed raids and murders in Kashmir territory near Gilgit, and that there had been the customary threats of coalition and attack.

What actually happened was that when Colonel Durand left for Simla, Dr. Robertson took over as Acting British Agent at Gilgit. The latter, bearing in mind the government of India's instructions that no action should be taken likely to lead to a collision with the Chilasi tribes, and that their headmen should be treated in a conciliatory manner, had, in July 1892, when acting as British Agent, invited a deputation of Chilasi headmen to visit him to discuss frontier matters, in the hope that a more friendly understanding might be arrived at which would assure peace and good feeling between the Gilgit authorities and the Chilasis. The headmen of Chilas had responded to his friendly overtures, and deputed representatives to meet him at Gilgit. The leader of the deputationists on taking his leave for departure had expressed his thanks for the kind reception of his party, begged that the past might be forgiven, and declared that in future the Chilasis would be obedient in all things.⁵ Hardly had the deputation left Gilgit,

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 272-273.

3. Col R.C.F., Schomberg, pp. 234-235.

4. Col Algernon Durand, p. 273.

5. Government of India to SSI, No. 142 (Sec-Front), July 11, 1893, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, August 1893, Nos. 6-34.

however, when some Chilasis made two raids across the frontier of the Gilgit district, in the course of which they committed several murders; and the inhabitants of the Sai valley petitioned the Acting British Agent at Gilgit declaring that, if protection were not afforded them, they must leave altogether.⁶

When the news of these disturbances on the Gilgit frontier were received by Durand at Simla he found that there was nothing for it but to offer to return to Gilgit, and a couple of days after he should have started for home Durand was on his way back to the frontier.⁷

On the way to Gilgit Durand heard that⁸ Hakim Gulab Khan, the agent representing the Kashmir government in Chilas, had been turned out by the wayward tributaries of that power,⁹ and that he had arrived at Gilgit alive, but with a bullet through his shoulder.¹⁰

Durand found on his arrival at Gilgit that the Gor headmen also had expressed their anxiety to come more directly under the protection of Kashmir. They were anxious to avoid being drawn into trouble should the Chilasis, as seemed likely, create large-scale disturbances, and to throw in their lot openly with Kashmir seemed to offer them the best chance of security.¹¹ In a few days of Durand's arrival their headmen arrived, and asked that they might be visited by a British officer. The Resident in Kashmir also considered that it was "very important to establish relations with Gor", which lay close upon the flank of the Kashmir-Gilgit road; and in pursuance of their desire to bring about amicable relations with the tribes of the Gilgit Agency, the government of India sanctioned that a British officer might visit Gor.

Surgeon—Major Robertson to Gor

Major Robertson started on the 11th of November 1892 for

6. *Ibid.*

7. Col Algernon Durand, pp. 268-269.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 270.

9. G.S. Robertson to RK, January 16, 1892, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, March 1892, Nos. 185-194.

10. Col Algernon Durand, p. 270.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 274.

Gor accompanied by Major Twigg,¹² with an escort of fifty rifles of the Body-Guard Regiment and some of the Puniali levies. He reached the border of Gor¹³, and here received a headman of Chilas, who had apparently been sent by the tribe to obtain information as to the British representative's movements. Robertson entertained this man in his camp, and gave him friendly assurances, and he left the next day promising to go back to Chilas and bring the leading men of the tribe to talk over frontier arrangements. Robertson soon found that this was a mere feint. Seeing the smallness of his escort, the Chilasi headmen had determined upon hostilities, and in the course of the day it became certain that an attack was imminent. Robertson was in a very difficult position, for his line of retreat on Boonji was a road lying for twenty miles, as Colonel Durand reports, "over one succession of precipices"; and there was no doubt that some critical point on this road would be seized and held by the enemy before he could reach it.

Dr. Robertson and Major Twigg determined to take the only step which seemed to offer a prospect of safety. Ten miles in advance, but in Chilas territory, was the strong village of Thalpen, containing ample supplies, and lying in the open, where the rifle fire of the small escort would have full effect, and where they could hold against 20 times their strength.¹⁴ Dr. Robertson's party pushed forward at dawn the next morning and seized the village, the Chilasis, who anticipated no forward movement, being completely taken by surprise.¹⁵

The crisis in the Indus valley had come at the most inopportune moment. Though there were plenty of troops at Gilgit, Durand was absolutely devoid of carriage, and to send troops in any adequate number forty miles down the Indus through one continuous and most difficult defile, along a path

12. Government of India to SSI, No. 142 (Sec Front), July 11, 1893, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, August 1893, Nos. 6-34.

13. Col Algernon Durand, p. 280.

14. Government of India to SSI, No. 142 (Sec Front), July 11, 1893, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, August 1893, Nos. 6-34; Col Algernon Durand, p. 280.

15. Government of India to SSI, No. 142 (Sec Front), July 11, 1893, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, August 1893, Nos. 6-34.

over which no animal could be taken, seemed an almost impossible task.

However, directly Durand received news of the dangers in the Indus valley, he collected every available man in the country, and sent them to Boonji to carry loads. He also asked Captain Capper, who was Executive Engineer at Boonji, to take command of troops there and to push reinforcements at all hazards down the river. At the same time, Durand called on the Governor of Gilgit to send expresses to Iskardu to collect a corps of Balti coolies.

The Occupation of Chilas

Meanwhile, Robertson, after entrenching himself in the village of Thalpen, was awaiting events. They developed rapidly¹⁶; Robertson had sent a raft, manned by five sepoy across the river to bring back the headmen whom one of their number had promised to bring. This was fired upon, and Captain Wallace¹⁷, who had replaced Major Twigg, who had returned to Gilgit in response to summons by Colonel Durand, in command of the escort¹⁸, was severely wounded while exposing himself in a vain attempt to save the men.¹⁹ Desultory fighting went on for some days, culminating in an attack on Thalpen by thousands of tribesmen which was beaten off.²⁰ Reinforcements began to arrive²¹, one body under a native officer after some very pretty fighting in which the Kashmir troops cleared a hill held by ten times their number at the point of the bayonet, and after an anxious fortnight the Agency's troops were²², on the 30th of November, installed in Chilas²³,

16. Viceroy to SSI, Telegram No. 710 (without date), Lansdowne Papers, Reel No. 4, NAI.

17. Viceroy to SSI, Telegram No. 710 (without date), Lansdowne Papers, Reel, No. 4, NAI.

18. Col Algernon Durand, p. 280.

19. Viceroy to SSI, Telegram No. 710 (without date), Lansdowne Papers, Reel No. 4, NAI.

20. Col Algernon Durand, p. 280.

21. Government of India to SSI, No. 142 (Sec Front), July 11. 1893, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, August 1893, Nos. 6-34.

22. Viceroy to SSI, Telegram No. 710 (without date), Lansdowne Papers, Reel No. 4, NAI; Col Algernon Durand, p. 281.

23. Government of India to SSI, No. 142 (Sec Front), July 11, 1893, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, August 1893, Nos. 6-34.

the line of communication was shifted to that side of the river, and the first round of the game was over.

There had been many instances of gallantry and devotion amongst men and officers, the troops had responded to the call made on them with the greatest eagerness, detachments had carried double the usual allowance of cartridges and several day's food, and had marched cheerfully forty miles with no real halts.

Chilas having in this manner fallen into the hands of the Gilgit authorities. Durand decided to retain possession of it until the orders of the government of India were received.²⁴ He was of the opinion that for the security of the Gilgit frontier, it was necessary to retain Chilas. The retention of the place would, Durand pointed out, greatly strengthen the British position, and he believed that withdrawal would certainly be followed by trouble on the frontier.

Besides occupying Chilas with a force of three hundred men of the Body Guard Regiment, under Major Daniell, Durand set to work making a six-foot track down the river to it. A line of posts was also established between it and Boonji.

The Attack on Chilas by the Tribes

In February 1893 Durand received certain information that a great rising of the Indus valley tribes was preparing, that large detachments from the Indus Valley Kohistan were mustering, and that in conjunction with the forces of Darel, Tangir, and Chilas, they meant to make a determined attack on the British in Chilas and on a post of theirs ten miles in rear of it. Durand warned Daniell at once, and a few days later was able to tell him the day—a day of great virtue amongst Mohamedans—on which the attack was to be delivered.

With Daniell was the Kashmir Agent in Chilas, a Mohamedan who knew the frontier well. By some unfortunate mistake this man, working out the dates from his Mohamedan calendar, calculated wrong. The mistake was found out, and a fresh calculation made, but Durand was of the belief that a confusion still existed. The day passed off quietly and the

24. Col Algernon Durand, p. 281.

last letter Durand got from Daniell expressed the belief that the enemy would not come.

The fateful day, however, as Durand feared, had been miscalculated. It had been the custom to post a picquet everyday a mile below the enclosure held by the troops. From this point a native officer with a telescope commanded the Indus valley for ten miles down. When the fateful day actually came, as no signs of the enemy had been seen, and the men were very hard-worked building up the stone breastwork round their enclosure, the picquet was not posted. Had it been in its accustomed place, the enemy's advance must have been noted. In the middle of the night Lieutenant Moberly was woken up by the sentry challenging the officer going the rounds, and heard them talking. He got up and asked what was wrong, and was informed by the sentry that he had heard many men in the ruined village a couple of hundred yards off. Hastily waking Daniell, Moberly turned the men out of their tents and lined the walls. As he did so, a couple of shots rang out in the village, and an instant later a dark mass of men left its cover and advanced to the attack, to be driven back by a couple of quietly delivered volleys.

At three O'clock Moberly with a handful of men left the enclosure, with orders to clear the village. He got into it to find himself in the face of overwhelming numbers, and after twenty minutes of fighting, at the end of which he had lost a couple of men and had been stunned by a bullet which grazed the top of his head, he saw that the thing was hopeless and withdrew his men. At half-past eight Daniell moved out with a hundred and fifty men—more could not be spared, as the enemy were now holding positions all round the entrenchment—and attacked the village. Heavy fighting went on till eleven when wounded men began to dribble in, and it was reported that Major Daniell had been killed. Shortly after Moberly heard that the men were running short of ammunition, and sent some out. Then came news that three Kashmiri officers²⁵—Subedar Man Singh, Subedar Bir Singh and Adjutant

25. Col Algernon Durand, pp. 283-285.

Nain Singh—were killed²⁶, and shortly after the attacking party fell back in good order under the remaining native officers.²⁷ Loss on the Gilgit side was severe. One British officer, Major Daniell, he was shot through the heart, three native officers (above mentioned), and nineteen men killed; one native officer and twenty-three men severely wounded; and Lieutenant Moberly and five native men slightly wounded.²⁸

For the rest of the day a desultory fire was kept up, and all night Moberly lined the walls. No further attack came, and in the morning the tribesmen were gone,²⁹ their loss being estimated at about 200 men killed.³⁰ The wounded were not so numerous, the fighting had been too close and deadly. And the little Gurkhas and Dogras had fought like men.³¹

Major Daniell gave the Chilas a bad knock which produced lasting peace in the Indus valley; and in giving it he lost his own life. And it was thought by superior British authorities at the time that he had sacrificed his life unnecessarily, and would have done better to remain in the fort.

Sir Francis Younghusband, who had experience of working on the frontier, however, found it difficult to concur in the opinion of the higher British authorities on the subject. For, as he held, had Major Daniell stopped in the fort the rising would have gathered strength and confidence, and the government of India would have felt themselves compelled to send a force to relieve him, and would have thereby suffered comparatively, a much more loss in men and money. But Daniell warded off such an eventuality by going out of the fort and hitting the rising hard before it had time to come to a head.³²

When Durand received news of the gruesome fight in Chilas where Daniell had laid down his life, fearing that the trouble would recur, he sent down Major Twigg at once to take

26. AAR, 1892-1893.

27. Col Algernon Durand, p. 285.

28. Viceroy to SSI, No. 177, March 14, 1893, Lansdowne Papers, Reel No. 4, NAI.

29. Col Algernon Durand, p. 285.

30. Government of India to SSI, No. 142 (Sec Front), July 11, 1893, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, August 1893, Nos. 6-34.

31. Col Algernon Durand, p. 285.

32. Younghusband, Sir Francis, *Light of Experience*, 1927, p. 182.

command, pushed down reinforcements, and gave orders that the village which the tribesmen had left was to be razed. Durand had heard that the ruined fort of Chilas was close to the British entrenchment, and also of the village, but he had understood that, as was generally the case in the Hindukush, village and fort were one, and if the village was allowed to stand, it would have dire results. A second attack was threatened, and as for various reasons the entrenchment could not be moved, the village should not a second time give cover to the enemy.³³ And these orders of Durand respecting the demolition of the village were carried out. The tribesmen must now attack in open, if at all.³⁴

Durand proceeds to, and returns from, Chilas

Meanwhile, reports of a great coalition of the Indus valley tribes to avenge their heavy losses were received by Colonel Durand from Chitral. The second attack was to come off after the forty days of mourning for the dead were passed. To meet this menace Durand started for Chilas with two hundred men and two³⁵ mountain guns³⁶, and arrived there on March 23³⁷, a day before the attack was expected, and was "honestly very glad when Twigg came into my tent late at night and said that information just received showed that the tribesmen's hearts had failed them, and that the gathering some miles below us had broken up".³⁸

Colonel Durand, therefore, returned to Gilgit on the 27th.³⁹ For some weeks, however, a further attack on Chilas was anticipated, the Chilasis having made strenuous efforts to induce the

33. Col Algernon Durand, p. 286.

34. Viceroy to SSI, No. 244, April 12, 1893, Lansdowne Papers, Reel No. 4, NAI.

35. Col Algernon Durand, p. 287.

36. Viceroy to SSI, No. 244, April 12, 1893, Lansdowne Papers, Reel No. 4, NAI.

37. Col Durand to Lt-Col Raja Ram Singh, No. 1100 of 21/24th March, 1893, JK 44 of 1893.

38. Col Algernon Durand, p. 288.

39. Viceroy to SSI, No. 244, April 12, 1893, Lansdowne Papers, Reel No. 4, NAI.

Swat Kohistanis and others to help them.⁴⁰ Colonel Durand, in the circumstances, expressed a strong desire to the government of India that he should be supported by a strong force to be sent from Abbottabad via the Kaghan valley to Chilas. The tribesmen of the Indus valley were, however, at first unable to join the Chilasis owing to the severe season; and subsequently, seeing that the Kashmir force showed no sign of advancing further, they declined to commit themselves. Pending the development of the situation, the government of India decided not to send reinforcements via the Kaghan valley, but a Pioneer Battalion was sent to improve the lower portion of the Abbottabad-Chilas road within British territory,⁴¹ and the Commander-in-Chief ordered a small force to be held in readiness, in case immediate action became necessary.⁴² But no such situation ever developed.

The Permanent Occupation of Chilas

Durand's temporary occupation of Chilas proved to be an abiding one. For, the Secretary of State for India, in compliance with the wishes of the majority of the members of the viceroy's council⁴³ sanctioned, on August 17, 1893, the opening up of the Kaghan-Chilas road, the retention of Chilas and the construction of a fort there.⁴⁴ The government of India took the above decision because they did not want to show the Chilasis that they were afraid of maintaining their position at Chilas, or of completing the Kaghan-Chilas road.⁴⁵ Furthermore, the road under consideration lay within the Punjab territory to within 20 miles of Chilas⁴⁶ across the

40. Government of India to SSI, No. 142 (Sec-Front), July 11, 1893, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, August 1893, Nos. 6-34.

41. *Ibid.*

42. Viceroy to SSI, No. 269, April 23, 1893, Lansdowne Papers, Reel No. 4, NAI.

43. Viceroy to SSI, No. 387, June 5, 1893, Lansdowne Papers, Reel No. 4, NAI.

44. SSI to Viceroy, No. 457, August 17, 1893, Lansdowne Papers, Reel No. 4, NAI.

45. Viceroy to SSI, No. 387, June 5, 1893, Lansdowne Papers, Reel No. 4, NAI.

46. Viceroy to SSI, No. 269, April 23, 1893, Lansdowne Papers, Reel No. 4, NAI.

Babusar⁴⁷ Pass, and was much the most direct road to Gilgit.⁴⁸

As to Robertson's visit to Gor in November 1892 and its aftermath, one authority thus remarks, "In November 1892, Durand asked his Assistant Dr. George Robertson to visit Gor to negotiate with the Chiefs. While Dr. Robertson was still in Gor, with his small force, he was attacked by the Chilasis. Inevitable hostilities broke out immediately. A force from Boonji was sent to relieve him and Chilas was occupied. The local tribes were not prepared to permit this and attacked with greater force in March 1893. All the tribes in the valley had now been aroused and any retreat in the face of such a general break would have been regarded as a sign of weakness. The Agent had thus brought about a situation in which the earlier cautious policy of the government of India could not be followed".⁴⁹

The Governor-General, Lord Lansdowne, in a communication, dated June 6, 1893, to the Secretary of State, The Earl of Kimberley, thus remarked upon the subject, "I regret that the officers of the Gilgit Agency should ever have allowed themselves to be entangled in hostilities with the Chilasis. It is just one of those cases of multiplying political relations and responsibilities that we were anxious to avoid, and against which you had cautioned us in your Despatch of 2nd December 1892"⁵⁰, and, "It would, I believe, have been better to have held aloof from Gor altogether".⁵¹

Some newspapers have also commented upon the Indus valley rising and its suppression. Thus, for instance, the *Banganivasi* of the 31st of March 1893 remarks, "The other day some two hundred and fifty savages attacked Chilas, and it is reported

47. SSI to Viceroy, No. 457, August 17, 1893, Lansdowne Papers, Reel No. 4, NAI; Misra, J.P., *The Administration of India under Lord Lansdowne, 1888-1894*, 1975, p. 27.

48. Viceroy to SSI, No. 269, April 23, 1893, Lansdowne Papers, Reel No. 4, NAI.

49. Misra, J.P., *The Administration of India under Lord Lansdowne (1888-1894)*, 1975, p. 27.

50. Lansdowne Papers, Reel No. 3, NAI.

51. Lansdowne to the Earl of Kimberley, May 30, 1893, Lansdowne Papers, Reel No. 3, NAI.

that they have been destroyed. This news may give delight to soldiers, but it will please nobody else. The British government of India will not rest satisfied until it has robbed the hill tribes who dwell on the North-Western frontier of India of both their freedom and their country. Indeed, it appears from the present attitude of the government to these tribes that it will not hesitate even to utterly extirpate such of them as may refuse to be bound to it in chains of friendship or of subjection".

And the comments of the Statesman were:—"These hillmen, robbed, without the slightest provocation, of all that men hold dear are being ruthlessly shot down in their struggles to retain their freedom, while the details of the butchery are flashed all over India and descanted on in glowing terms in the press as a proof of the greatness and glory of England."⁵²

It cannot be denied that Durand's advance into Gor produced the effect of entangling the government of India with the frontier tribes, and that had he not taken this step this embroilment would have been postponed if not altogether averted. But the Chilasis had, as has been mentioned before, become a nuisance for their neighbours, in whose territories they committed depredations and murders. Some of them, like the people of the Sai valley, were thinking even in terms of leaving their countries unless the Gilgit authorities afforded them protection against their erring neighbours. It was, we should say, a moral responsibility of the Gilgit authorities to ensure that peace and tranquillity reigned within the borders of the Gilgit Agency, and that innocent people like those of Gor and the Sai valley did not suffer at the hands of the irresponsible and lawless ones. Thoughts of expediency also justify Robertson's visit to Gor. For, he visited this territory in response to the invitation of its people who were peaceful, inoffensive and placid. By this visit to their country the Gilgit authorities expected the people of Gor to come more directly under the protection of Kashmir, tributary though they already were to that State. The results of the operations

52. Report on Native Newspapers Bengal, January—June 1893 for the week ending the 8th April 1893, p. 285, NAI.

against the Indus valley people also tend weight to the argument that the 'entanglement' with the tribes was, in the interest of peace in the area, essential because it, as in the words of Sir Francis Younghusband, gave the Chilas a bad knock which produced lasting peace in the Indus valley".

Durand Leaves Gilgit for Good

After the disturbances in the Indus valley were quelled, Colonel Durand left, in May 1893, Gilgit for India, Doctor Robertson taking over the work of the Agency. He spent some weeks at Simla, and then, took three month's leave and went home, intending to return in the autumn. But the fates decreed otherwise, and he did not rejoin his appointment.⁵³

Colonel Durand was a specially selected officer invested with extensive powers and was in chief military command as well as in political control at Gilgit. Whether by design or from a natural tendency, that may Durand thought proper to assume and maintain a very Olympian pose during his tenure and his successors did not depart little from it. He kept great State. He exacted the most deferential behaviour on all public occasions from all with whom he had dealings and he made public occasions numerous. This conduct on his part proved to be very wise as it enabled the British government to maintain the Gilgit frontier at a small measure of cost in money or anxiety since he laid the foundations.⁵⁴ His edifice rested upon three main props:—

1. a firm belief in the invincible strength of the British Empire;
2. an unquestioning assurance that the British officer, and especially the Political Agent, was a creature of superior clay, whose voice must be hearkened to and obeyed, as it were the voice of a god;
3. a policy towards the people of the political districts of the Agency and their rulers based on liberality, justice

53. Col Algernon Durand, p. 290.

54. Copy of Sir Evelyn Howell's Report on his tour in the Gilgit Agency, dated November 25, 1927, GOI, Fgn and Pol Department, File No. 186-X (Sec) of 1935, 1-29.

and courtesy, with a minimum of interference, by which their contentment should be secured.⁵⁵

Durand worked whole-heartedly all through his tenure of five years at Gilgit. The changes five years had wrought were great, the Kashmir troops on the frontier, instead of an ill-paid, undisciplined and ill-armed rabble, were an efficient body of troops regularly paid and well-fed, who had given their proofs in severe fighting; good roads existed in the place of tracks torturing alike to baggage animals and laden men using them, and the rivers were bridged; extensive irrigation schemes, which were to prove of inestimable value to the people, were in hand;⁵⁶ and peace had been everywhere enforced from the borders of Chinese Turkestan to Chilas and since then there occurred no disturbance in the region.⁵⁷

This does not, however, mean that Durand had completed the work, that perfection was attained, or that what credit there may have been was due to the British on the frontier alone. The Kashmir troops, for instance, were but part of the great force of Imperial Service Troops at the disposal of the British government in India by the native Chiefs, but under the British they had received their baptism of fire.

In fact, Durand had succeeded in attaining the object of the government of India in establishing British Agency at Gilgit. This work had been hard, the times often anxious, but the difficulties Durand had to encounter had been surmounted owing to the sympathy, devotion, and courage of the band of young British officers who had served under him, to the pluck and uncomplaining endurance of the troops at his command, and to the intelligence and loyalty of his native assistants.⁵⁸

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55. *Ibid.*

56. Col Algernon Durand, p. 291.

57. GOI, Fgn and Pol (Sec), No. 205-X of 1935, Nos. 1-31.

58. Col Algernon Durand, pp. 291-292.

The Chitral Imbroglia of 1895

By far the most important development during the period of our study was the siege and relief of the principal fort in Chitral.* The ruler of this State, Aman-ul-Mulk, died on August 30, 1892.¹ At his accession he had killed all his near relations, except his brother, Sher Afzul, who had made his escape into Badakhshan, and afterwards to Kabul, where he lived in exile for over thirty years.²

Aman-ul-Mulk left dozens of children, but in August 1892 only two were looked upon as important. Between them seemingly, the succession lay, for they were legitimate, a matter of the first consequence in Chitral. They were Nizam-ul-Mulk and Afzul-ul-Mulk.³ At the time of Aman-ul-Mulk's death, Nizam-ul-Mulk was away from Chitral. He was in Yasin, of which he was the Governor, and the Mehtarship was seized by his brother Afzul who happened to be in Chitral⁴; Nizam taking refuge with the British Agent in Gilgit. Afzul-ul-Mulk

* Chitral (the name applied to the State, to its capital and to its main fort) Swinson, Arthur, *North West Frontier*, 1967, p. 207.

1. Chitral and Kashmir relations from the beginning till 1895, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, July 1895, Nos. 946-998.

2. Thomson H.C., *The Chitral Campaign*, hereafter quoted as Thomson, H.C. 1895, p. 2, Thomson accompanied the force which marched from Peshawar under General Low for the relief of the Chitral fort, as a Press correspondent.

3. Robertson, Sir George, *Chitral, The Story of a Minor Siege* hereafter quoted as Sir George Robertson, 1898, p. 28 Robertson was one of the besieged in the Chitral fort.

4. Younghusband, Captain G.J. and Younghusband, Captain Frank E., *The Relief of Chitral*, hereafter quoted as Younghusband and Younghusband 1895, pp. 3-4 Captain Frank E. Younghusband served as special correspondent with General Low's force.

was, however, killed, after a reign of a few months, by his uncle, Sher Afzul, who coming up stealthily from Kabul, attacked the fort by night, and killed him during the melee.⁵

Nizam-ul-Mulk, hearing of the death of his brother, at once plucked up courage to make an attempt to gain the throne of Chitral. The British Agent, Colonel Durand, gave him leave to execute his intention.

Nizam-ul-Mulk, on crossing the frontier, was joined by a large number of men from the upper valleys of Chitral, with whom he had been brought up as a youth, and who were always much attached to him. A force of 1200 men, which Sher Afzul sent to oppose him, also went over to him, and he immediately marched on Mastuj, which he occupied without difficulty. And Sher Afzul, seeing the game was up, again fled to Kabul, and Nizam-ul-Mulk became Mehtar.⁶ He asked the British government that a political officer might reside in Chitral territory; and a mission under the charge of Sir George Robertson, and which consisted of Lieutenant C.G. Bruce, Lieutenant J.H. Gordon and Captain Younghusband, with fifty men of the 15th Sikhs was ordered to proceed to Chitral.⁷

In the middle of January 1893, the party crossed the Shandur Pass⁸ and, despite severe weather, reached Chitral without mishap on the 25th of that month. Here the Mission remained till the 25th of May⁹, giving to the Mehtar that support which he so much required in consolidation of his rule.¹⁰ On the 26th Sir George Robertson and Lieutenant Bruce, in accordance with the instructions of the government of India dated April 21, 1893, started for Gilgit, leaving Captain Younghusband and Lieutenant Gordon at Chitral with the whole of the escort, which he considered it imprudent to

5. Thomson, H.C, p. 3.

6. Government of India to SSI, No. 233 (Sec Front), December 28, 1892, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, January 1893, Nos. 1-161 ; Thomson, H.C, p. 3.

7. Viceroy to SSI, No. 14P, January 7, 1893, Lansdowne Papers, Reel No. 4, NAI ; Younghusband and Younghusband, pp. 7-8.

8. Younghusband and Younghusband, p. 9.

9. Government of India to SSI, No. 233 (Sec Front), December 28, 1892 GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, January 1893, Nos. 1-161.

10. Younghusband and Younghusband, p. 9.

reduce.¹¹ As the months went by, the Mehtar gradually strengthened his position, and at the end of September, Captain Younghusband and Lieutenant Gordon, and members of their escort were able to withdraw to Mastuj,¹² a place sixty-three miles north-east of Chitral,¹³ which the government of India desired should in future be the headquarters of the Political Agent at Chitral. During the following year, no event of importance occurred upon this frontier, though Umra Khan, the ruler of Jandul,¹⁴ immediately bordering Chitral on the south,¹⁵ was constantly causing trouble by attacking the villages considered by the Mehtar to belong to Chitral.¹⁶

The Mehtar, Nizam-ul-Mulk, however, could not rule the State for long. The trouble soon appeared. Sher Afzul, after his sudden descent on Chitral in November 1892, and his flight before Nizam-ul-Mulk in the following month, had been interned in Kabul, and the Amir of that country had written to the British Agent there that he (Sher Afzul) would not again create disturbances in Chitral. Most of the sons of the late Mehtar Aman-ul-Mulk had either been murdered or had fled the country. Of the latter, one was Amir-ul-Mulk, a youth of from 18 to 20 years of age, who, on the accession of Nizam-ul-Mulk, had fled to Jandul, and taken refuge with Umra Khan.

In May 1894, Amir-ul-Mulk returned to Chitral professing to have escaped from Umra Khan's hands, and was kindly received by Nizam-ul-Mulk. On January 1, 1895, while the brothers were out hawking at Broz, a few miles from Chitral, Nizam-ul-Mulk was suddenly shot dead by a follower of Amir-ul-Mulk. The death was instantaneous. Amir-ul-Mulk promptly seized the Chitral Fort, and proclaimed himself Mehtar. Two of Nizam-ul-Mulk's leading officials and some

11. Government of India to SSI, No. 233 (Sec Front), December 28, 1892. GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, January 1893, Nos. 1-161.

12. Younghusband and Younghusband, p. 9.

13. Government of India (Sec-Front) to H.H. Fowler, No. 66, April 17, 1895, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, July 1895, Nos. 1-433.

14. Younghusband and Younghusband, p. 9.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

of his partisans were murdered at the same time, and others taken prisoners.¹⁷

At the time of this unfortunate occurrence,¹⁸ Lieutenant B.E.M. Gurdon,¹⁹ who had succeeded Captain Younghusband a few weeks before in the political charge of Chitral, was on a visit to the capital, Chitral, with an escort of eight sikhs:²⁰ the rest of his escort of 100 men remained posted at Mastuj. Amir-ul-Mulk sent a deputation to him asking to be recognised as Mehtar.²¹ Lieutenant Gurdon told him that he could merely refer the matter to the government of India and await their orders. This Lieutenant Gurdon now did, but it may be imagined that his position at this time was one of considerable anxiety which required all the tact and coolness which he now proved himself to possess.²² He had at once sent for a reinforcement of fifty Sikhs from his escort at Mastuj,²³ and these reached him on the 8th; and that they were able to do so, and were not hindered or molested on the way, is a sign that at that time there was no defined spirit of hostility to the British.²⁴

The news of the murder of Nizam-ul-Mulk reached Gilgit on the 6th of January, 1895.²⁵ In anticipation of trouble, Robertson, the British Agent at Gilgit, sent 100 men to reinforce Mastuj, 200 men were marched to Ghizar, and about the middle of January Robertson himself started for Chitral. He reached there on the 1st of February,²⁶ after a cold and difficult march over the Shandur Pass. He had with him an escort commanded by Captain Townshend of the Central India Horse,

17. Lt. B.E.M. Gurdon to G.S. Robertson, No. 307, January 2, 1895, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, March 1895, Nos. 193-359; Government of India to H.H. Fowler, No. 66 of 1895, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, July 1895, Nos. 1-433.

18. Younghusband and Younghusband, p. 9.

19. GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, March 1895, Nos. 193-359.

20. Younghusband and Younghusband, p. 9.

21. Government of India, Fgn, (Sec-Front), to H.H. Fowler No. 66, April 17, 1895, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, July 1895, Nos. 1-433.

22. Younghusband and Younghusband, p. 12.

23. Government of India, Fgn, (Sec-Front), to H.H. Fowler, No. 66, April 17, 1895, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, July 1895, Nos. 1-433.

24. Younghusband and Younghusband, p. 12.

25. Sir George Robertson, p. 52.

26. Government of India, Fgn, (Sec-Front), to H.H. Fowler, No. 66, April 17, 1895, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, July 1895, Nos. 1-433.

composed of two hundred and eighty men of the 14th Sikhs under Lieutenant Harley. With Robertson were also Captain Campbell of the Central India Horse, and Surgeon Captain Whitchurch; Captain Baird of the 24th Punjab Infantry, the military assistant to the British Agent, arriving a day or two later.²⁷

Until Robertson arrived, Gurdon remained in Chitral and occupied a house in an excellent position for defence, if necessary, and commenced quietly laying in supplies. Amir-ul-Mulk sent more than one deputation to him, asking to be recognised as Mehtar, but Lieutenant Gurdon declined to commit himself to any other statement than that the orders of the British government must be awaited. He continued to adopt this attitude on all subsequent occasions, when Amir-ul-Mulk personally visited him, and preferred the same request.²⁸

Meanwhile, Umra Khan took the opportunity which the troubles in Chitral afforded to invade the country, ostensibly with the object of supporting Amir-ul-Mulk, but with the real intention of annexing it to his own dominions.

In spite of the heavy snow on the Lowarai Pass, 10,000 feet in height, which separated him from Chitral, Umra Khan marched with 3,000 men into that country. The Chitralis at first opposed this Pathan force. They had always looked upon the Pathans as their hereditary enemies, and had on many previous occasions resisted invasions by them. Had they now had any leader to keep them together, and to encourage them, the Chitralis would have been able to repulse the invaders. Could the British have supported them in their resistance they would have gained heart and beaten back Umra Khan's men. But Amir-ul-Mulk, their would-be leader, was incapable of exercising authority. He had not been recognised by the British officers as Mehtar, and it was doubtful whether he ever would be; and his hope lay therefore more with Umra Khan than with the British, and the British officers were unable to support the Chitralis in a quarrel of their own with this neighbouring chief without the direct instructions of their government. The

27. Thomson, H.C, p. 12.

28. Government of India, Fgn, (Sec-Front), to H.H. Fowler No. 66, April 17, 1895, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, July 1895, Nos. 1-433.

resistance of the Chitralis therefore remained feeble, Umra Khan succeeded in capturing Kila Drosh, the principal fort on the southern frontier of Chitral, and this he immediately commenced to strengthen.²⁹ Robertson, however, at once wrote to him to proceed no further into Chitral territory and to retire forthwith from Kila Drosh. But Umra Khan disregarded this advice altogether.³⁰

And now, just as affairs had taken this unfavourable turn, just when the Chitralis were divided and leaderless, when their country had an invader in its midst, once more appears upon the scene Sher Afzul. He was permitted by the Amir of Afghanistan to escape from a confinement in which he had kept him for two years, a confinement which he had, as has been mentioned before, most solemnly declared to the government of India would be permanent. Sher Afzul arrived on the 23rd of February and joined Umra Khan at Drosh.³¹

Robertson did not receive reliable information of his arrival in Chitral territory until the 24th of February, when he at once entered into communication with him. On the 27th Robertson received from Sher Afzul, through a confidential messenger, a demand that he should go back to Mastuj at once. Sher Afzul promised to be friends with the government of India on the same terms as previous Mehtars of Chitral, but his promise was coupled with a threat that if his terms were not conceded, Umra Khan would at once advance.³²

The two princes had, in fact, made an alliance, the basis of which was really hostility to the British government. They were to induce or force the British officers from Chitral territory, and after that had been effected, they could then decide who should rule the country, one thing only being certain, that whoever should be the nominal Mehtar, Umra Khan would be the ruler practically.³³

Robertson replied to Sher Afzul that the Maharaja of Kashmir was the suzerain of Chitral, and that neither Umra

29. Younghusband and Younghusband, pp. 12-15.

30. Thomson, H.C, p. 16.

31. Younghusband and Younghusband, p. 15.

32. Government of India, Fgn, (Sec-Front), to H.H. Fowler, No. 66, April 17, 1895, GOI. Fgn, Sec-F, July 1895. Nos. 1-433.

33. Younghusband and Younghusband, p. 16.

Khan nor any one else could impose a Mehtar on Chitral without the permission of the government of India. Robertson added that Sher Afzul's message was wanting in respect to the government of India, that he was informing them of Sher Afzul's demands, and would communicate their instructions to him, and that if in the meantime he attempted any overt acts of hostility, he must take the consequences on his own head.³⁴

Sher Afzul's arrival greatly augmented the danger of a situation that was already sufficiently full of peril. Robertson, therefore, wrote again to Umra Khan telling him that the orders of the British government must be obeyed, and that he must leave Chitral territory without any further delay, and that if he did not do so he, the British Agent, would assist the Chitralis to make him go. But to this warning also Umra Khan paid no attention.³⁵

At the end of February, the Chitralis were still opposing the Pathans and holding a position at Ghairat,³⁶ half way between Chitral and Drosh,³⁷ and Umra Khan was rapidly completing his preparations for the defence of Kila Drosh against their attack, which he believed to be imminent. A few Chitralis of the lower class had gone over to Sher Afzul, but the Adamzadas or members of aristocracy, though suspected of being partisans of Sher Afzul, had not yet openly defected.³⁸ They suddenly, however, changed their minds and went over in a body to Sher Afzul, joined the Pathan Chief, and came surging on in a wave towards the fort of Chitral, which Robertson, with the escort he had brought with him from Gilgit, had in the meanwhile occupied. Amir-ul-Mulk was taken under custody by the British and kept in the fort³⁹ Robertson had

34. Government of India, Fgn, (Sec-Front), to H.H. Fowler, No. 66, April 17, 1895, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, July 1895, Nos. 1-433.

35. Thomson, H.C, p. 16.

36. Government of India, Fgn, (Sec--Front), to H.H. Fowler, No. 66, April 17, 1895, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F July 1895, Nos. 1-433.

37. Thomson, H.C, p. 16.

38. Government of India, Fgn, (Sec-Front), to H.H. Fowler, No. 66, April 17, 1895, GOI; Fgn, Sec-F, July 1895, Nos. 1-433.

39. Younghusband and Younghusband, p. 17.

formally recognised Shuja-ul-Mulk, an intelligent, trustworthy little son of Aman-ul-Mulk and a full brother of Amir-ul-Mulk himself, nine or ten years old, as provisional Mehtar of Chitral pending the orders of the government of India.⁴⁰

Information of the serious turn which affairs had taken in Chitral was received by the government of India on the 7th of March, and they immediately decided that preliminary arrangements should be undertaken, in order to be prepared, if necessary, to operate against Umra Khan from the direction of Peshawar. It was believed that the garrison in the Chitral Fort could resist an attack from Umra Khan and Sher Afzul's forces, and hold out as long as their ammunition and supplies lasted; but as communications were all interrupted, and as retreat was cut off, it appeared imperative that no effort should be spared to effect their relief by the end of April, if the investment was not otherwise removed before that date.⁴¹

On the 14th of March, in order that Umra Khan might have a distinct notice of the decision to which the government of India had thus come, a final letter of warning was sent to him recounting the various warnings given to him against interfering with the Chitral affairs, mentioning his various acts of aggression, directing him to at once quit Chitral territory, and telling him that if by the 1st of April he had not withdrawn, the government of India would compel him to do so. The letter went on to say that the government of India were making fresh preparations to send forward their forces for that purpose, and that he would only have himself to blame for any evil results that might fall upon him.⁴² At the same time a proclamation in the following terms was issued to the peoples of Swat and Bajaur⁴³ :

40. Thomson, H.C, p. 6 ; Younghusband and Younghusband, p. 17.

41. Government of India, Fgn, (Sec-Front), to H.H. Fowler No. 66, April 17, 1895, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, July 1895, Nos. 1-433.

42. Foreign Secy to R. Udny, Peshawar, No. 919 F, March 14, 1895, Lansdowne Papers, Reel No. 12, NAI ; Government of India, Fgn, (Sec-Front), to H.H. Fowler, No. 66, April 17, 1895, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, July 1895, Nos. 1-433.

43. Government of India, Fgn, (Sec-Front), to H.H. Fowler, No. 66, April 17, 1895, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, July 1895, Nos. 1-433.

“Be it known to you, and any other persons concerned, that Umra Khan, the Chief of Jandul, in spite of his often repeated assurances of friendship to the British government, and regardless of frequent warnings to refrain from interfering with the affairs of Chitral, which is a protected State under the suzerainty of Kashmir, has forcibly entered the Chitral valley, and attacked the Chitrali people.”

“The government of India have now given Umra Khan full warning that, unless he retires from Chitral by the 1st of April, corresponding with the 5th day of Shawl 1312 H, they will use force to compel him to do so. In order to carry out this purpose, they have arranged to assemble on the Peshawar border a force of sufficient strength to overcome all resistance, and to march this force through Umra Khan’s territory towards Chitral.

“The sole object of the government of India is to put an end to the present, and prevent any future, unlawful aggression on Chitral territory; and as soon as this object has been attained, the force will be withdrawn.”

The proclamation went on to say that the government of India had no intention of permanently occupying any territory through which Umra Khan’s misconduct might now force them to pass, or of interfering with the independence of the tribes; that they would scrupulously avoid any acts of hostility towards the tribesmen so long as they on their part refrained from attacking or impeding in any way the march of the troops; that supplies and transports would be paid for, and that all persons were at liberty to pursue their ordinary avocations in perfect security.⁴⁴

Orders were also now issued for the mobilisation of the 1st Division of the Field Army under Major-General Sir Robert Low.⁴⁵

While preparations of this force were in progress, news of some more serious developments which had occurred in

44. Foreign Secy to Chief Secy Punjab Government, March 14, 1895, Elgin Papers, Reel No. 4, NAI.

45. Government of India, Fgn, (Sec-Front) to H.H. Fowler No. 66, April 17, 1895 GOI. Fgn, Sec-F, July 1895, Nos. 1-433.

the Gilgit Agency reached the government of India. A brief review of these developments is attempted below.

Captain Ross and Lieutenant Edwardes

Soon after the British Agent and his escort had proceeded to Chitral Captain C.R. Ross and Lieutenant H.J. Jones, with two companys of the 14th Sikhs, moved up from Gilgit to Mastuj as pre-arranged.

Between Mastuj and Gilgit there were only two fortified posts, one at Gupis at the head of the Yasin valley, and the other at Ghizar, fifteen miles on the Gilgit side of the Shandur Pass, which lay between it and Mastuj. In 1894 a strong fort was built at Gupis. But at Ghizar there was only a native house with a few outbuildings. Lieutenant Gough, who was on special service with the Kashmir Imperial Service Troops, was put in command at Gupis with a garrison of 140 Kashmir Rifles, and Captain de Vismes with 100 rifles at Ghizar.⁴⁶

Between Mastuj and Chitral there was no fort, only a small fortified post at Buni, eighteen miles from Mastuj. The fort at Mastuj was very old and dilapidated, and unfit for defence, but it was in a better position and much less commanded from the neighbouring hillsides than the fort at Chitral. The Yarkun river, which was afterwards known as the Chitral river or Kunar river, flowed past it from the north through a valley which ultimately terminated in the Baroghil Pass. Another valley joined it at right angles to the east and led to the Shandur Pass, over which the road to Gilgit passed.⁴⁷

On the 16th of January Lieutenant Fowler was ordered to proceed from Gilgit to Gupis with twenty Bengal Sappers and Miners. He remained there about a fortnight, when he was directed,⁴⁸ presumably, by Captain W.H. Stewart, who had taken charge at Gilgit after Robertson had left for Chitral,⁴⁹ to go on to Chitral with Lieutenant Edwardes.

Edwardes and Fowler had a terribly cold march over the Shandur Pass, but succeeded in reaching Mastuj in eight days.

46. *Ibid.*, also Thomson, H.C, p. 87 ; Younghusband and Younghusband, pp. 22-23.

47. Thomson, H.C., p. 59.

48. *Ibid* , p. 88.

49. Younghusband and Younghusband, p. 133.

There they found Lieutenant Moberly in command, Ross and Jones having gone out a day or two before to apprehend one of the petty local Chiefs who had been breaking down the road and stopping the mails. On the 5th of March they left Mastaj with seven days' rations, meeting Jones on the way, bringing back the Chief and a few of his followers prisoners. They reached Buni the same evening, and found Captain Ross there ; and also a subedar of the 4th Kashmir Rifles who had been sent,⁵⁰ under instructions from Robertson, ahead with forty men and sixty boxes of ammunition.⁵¹

The next morning Ross returned to Mastuj, and Edwardes and Fowler continued their march, taking the Kashmir Rifles and the ammunition along with them. About three O'clock in the afternoon they arrived at Reshun, the first stage beyond Buni, where they were told that there was a hostile gathering a mile or two ahead. Lest they should meet with opposition, they chose a defensible position near the river, and made a sangar there.⁵²

The next morning, leaving the bulk of the sepoy on guard, they took a few men and proceeded to reconnoitre before going further. As they could see no signs of an enemy, Edwardes, who was in command, sent Fowler on with eight or nine Sappers and some timber to mend the road, which was reported to have been broken down. Immediately after leaving Reshun this road went a thousand feet straight up the side of an exceedingly steep hill, and down an equally steep descent on the other side. There it came out on a small open plateau, where Edwardes halted, and Fowler went ahead to carry out his instructions, wound through a defile along the face of a precipitous cliff overhanging the river bed. Directly opposite was the mouth of a nullah, Ovirgh, which ended in a broad fan on which stood the village of Parpish, terminating abruptly in a cliff over 100 feet in height.

50. Thomson, H.C, pp. 88-89.

51. Viceroy to SSI, No. 246a, March 22, 1895, Elgin Papers, Reel No. 4, NAI ; Government of India, Fgn, (Sec-Front), to H.H. Fowler, No. 66, April 17, 1895, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, July 1895, Nos. 1-433.

52. Thomson, H.C, pp. 89-90 ; Younghusband and Younghusband, pp. 27-28.

When Fowler got into this defile he was suddenly fired upon, not only from the village on the opposite side of the stream, but from the cliffs above, from which the enemy also rolled down rocks upon him. He therefore rejoined Edwardes, who had also come under fire. One of the sepoy was mortally wounded, and several other men were hit, so that it was necessary to retreat at once, as the enemy were in greatly superior numbers. This, however, was a difficult operation, as between them and Reshun was the steep hill over which they had come, and which was quite bare and exposed to the enemy's fire.⁵³

As they neared Reshun another body of men appeared on the hills above the village, and with their previous assailants closed in round the breast-work, which though conveniently placed for obtaining water was commanded both from front and rear from about 500 yards. In a very short time eight men were killed and fourteen wounded, and it was evident that they could remain no longer in so exposed a position. They therefore occupied a cluster of houses, constituting a small village, a few hundred yards distant, hastily making them as defensible as they were able.⁵⁴

All night there was desultory firing, and the men had not to have any food. They had to stand to their posts, ready for an assault. The cold too was very trying, the ground being covered with snow. All the next day the firing continued, but no serious attack was made, and they were able twice to sally out and collect water. On the night of the 9th, however, a determined assault came. The tribesmen were repulsed with much loss, but five of the Kashmir Rifles were killed and six wounded.

The following night, March 10th, Fowler made a sortie with twenty men to get water. They crept quietly up to a bend of the wall on the cliff where they could not be seen, and surprised forty or fifty of the enemy sitting beside a bonfire—the glare of which prevented them from seeing clearly—and charging suddenly killed more than twenty of them. While Fowler was out the village they occupied was assaulted, but Edwardes succeeded in repelling the attack before they returned.⁵⁵

53. Thomson, H.C, p. 90 ; Younghusband and Younghusband, pp. 28-29.

54. Thomson, H.C, p. 91 ; Younghusband and Younghusband, pp. 31-32.

55. Thomson, H.C; pp. 92-93 ; Younghusband and Younghusband, pp. 33-36.

After the assault on the 10th the besiegers contended themselves with investing the village, and getting gradually closer up to it. This they had no difficulty in doing, for there was plenty of cover—stone walls, and detached houses and trees—of which they could avail themselves. Only about thirty yards off was a large Chinara or sycamore tree in which they built a crow's nest from which they kept up a very galling fire.⁵⁶

On the 13th the tribesmen hoisted a white flag, and Mahomed Isa Khan, a foster brother of Sher Afzul, told the garrison that he had come from Chitral to stop the fighting, and that he wanted to have a conference with Edwardes. He added that there had been fighting in Chitral, but that peace had been made, and he offered the garrison a safe conduct either to Mastuj or Chitral.⁵⁷ Edwardes concluded an armistice for three days. The terms of the truce were faithfully observed ; the garrison being allowed to fetch water unmolested, and victuals being supplied to them.

On the 14th, Edwardes had a second interview with Mahomed Isa Khan, who was accompanied by Yad Gar Beg, another of the Chitrali nobles, and who confirmed what Mohamed Isa Khan had said the day before. On the 15th Mohamed Isa Khan asked the British officers if they might play a game of polo. The British officers somehow could not refuse to grant the request. But their enemies were harbouring treacherous designs in their minds against them ; they, immediately after the game was over, seized Edwardes and Fowler, and made them captives. The Chitralis then attacked the village and took it by assault, putting most of the defenders to the sword.⁵⁸

A day or two later the British officers along with twelve sepoy who had been taken prisoners during the assault were taken to Umra Khan at Drosh. Umra Khan received them politely, and treated them well. On the 26th of March, they started for Jandul, and arrived at Barwa on the 30th, at which place they were given the best food and were treated with much

56. Thomson, H.C, p. 94.

57. Government of India, Fgn, (Sec-Front), to H.H. Fowler, No. 66, April 17, 1895, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, July 1895, Nos. 1-433 ; Thomson, H.C, p. 98 ; Younghusband and Younghusband, pp. 37-38.

58. Thomson, H.C, pp. 98-100 ; Younghusband and Younghusband, pp. 37-42,

kindness and consideration. Finally, the British officers were sent with an escort unharmed into the camp of Sir Robert Low at Sado when the latter was on his way to relieve Chitral.* The sepoy were also set free, and allowed to make their way back as best as they could.⁵⁹

“The magnanimous forbearance—a forbearance so rarely shown by the Pathans to the conquered—with which Umra Khan treated the British captives created in India a feeling not only of astonishment, but of respect.”⁶⁰

When Edwardes and Fowler found that they were likely to meet with opposition in Reshun they had sent back word to Mastuj, and Captain Ross started at once to their assistance with Lieutenant Jones and ninety-three men of the 14th Sikhs. He left thirty-three men in the post at Buni, and went on with the other sixty towards Reshun. Midway between the two places was a village called Karagh, and half a mile further on the road entered a narrow defile where the river twisted through precipitous cliffs.⁶¹

They had advanced nearly to the end of this defile when they were suddenly fired upon from a sangar on the opposite bank, and almost at the same moment a large body of men appeared on the rocks above them, and began hurling stones down upon them. The enemy were seen to be in great strength, so Ross decided that it would be better to retire to Karagh where they could seize and occupy a house until relieved, than to try and force their way through to Reshun. He therefore ordered Jones to hurry back and hold the Karagh end of the defile with ten men in order to cover the retreat.

* For further details, see the following account.

59. Thomson H.C, pp. 100-102 ; Younghusband and Younghusband, pp. 43-51.

60. Thomson, H C, p. 104.

61. RK to Fgn, Calcutta No. 16 J, March 21, 1895, Elgin Papers, MSS EUR F 84/73 EXP 240 ; Beynon, Lieutenant, WGL, *With Kelly to Chitral*, hereafter quoted as Lt. W.G.L., Beynon, 1896, pp. 83-84 ; Thomson, H.C, p. 105 ; Younghusband and Younghusband, pp. 23-24 (Lieutenant Beynon acted as staff officer to Colonel G.J. Kelly's force that marched to Chitral from Gilgit for the relief of the garrison besieged in the fort there).

Jones endeavoured to do this, but in the meanwhile the tribesmen had closed in behind them, and he found himself confronted by a sangar built right across the path. From this sangar so heavy a fire was opened upon him that only two out of his ten men remained unwounded. So he rejoined Ross, who had collected the rest of the men in a cave just underneath the road.

After an anxious consultation they determined when it became dark to make another attempt to fight their way out of the defile ; and about eight O'clock they rushed out in the hope that the enemy would be off their guard ; but they found them waiting for them, and not only came under a galling fire, but were in great peril from the stoneshoots* of which several had to be crossed.

The Chitralis had stationed themselves on the tops of the shoots, and the whole party were in danger of being annihilated. They therefore returned to the cave, and waited till the moon rose when they again sallied out, and tried to climb up the face of the cliff immediately above them ; but before going very far they were stopped by a precipice, and had to go back once more to the cave. There they remained without food during the whole of the following day ; and when night came they felt that they must try and cut their way out under cover of darkness, no matter what it might cost them, rather than wait in the cave to be starved. So in the middle of the night, when they thought the enemy would be least likely to be on the alert, they made a sudden attack on the sangars, and after a desperate struggle succeeded in taking them ; but in doing so Ross was shot in the head and killed on the spot.⁶²

The Chitralis, who had only retired a short distance up the hill, kept up an incessant fire, and so did the tribesmen from the other side of the river ; and when at last they reached the end of the defile they had very few men left.

What happened afterwards is best told in Jone's own words.

* Stoneshoots are a natural collection of stones held loosely together so that if one of them is moved the whole lot of them crashes down in an avalanche.

62. Lt. W.G.L. Beynon, pp. 85-86 ; Thomson, H.C, pp. 106-109 ; Young-husband and Younghusband, pp. 25-26.

In his report, he says, "I and seventeen rank and file reached the maidan on the Karagh side of the hill in safety. When I got there I halted, and reformed my men, and stayed there some ten minutes, keeping up a heavy fire on the sangars on both sides of the river in order to help any more of the men who might get through. While we were halted here two bodies of the enemy's swordsmen attempted to charge us, but we checked by volleys, losing heavily...two more of my party were killed, and one mortally wounded, while I had been waiting there. Of the remainder I myself and nine sepoy were wounded. We retired slowly on Buni, where we arrived about 6 a.m. It was quite impossible to bring away any wounded men who were unable to walk with us. It was equally impossible to bring their rifles, and therefore a certain number of these, about forty, fell into the enemy's hands."⁶³

It was afterwards found that about thirty men who had been wounded, or who had been unable to get past the stone-shoots retreated again to the cave, where they were hemmed in by the Chitralis on all sides. They were able to get water, but they had no food, and gradually got weaker and weaker. But in spite of hunger and wounds they held out for more than a week, and then only surrendered under a promise that their lives should be spared. This promise, however, was not kept. One or two men were taken possession of by the more far-seeing of their captors, who afterwards obtained a reward for sending them back to Colonel Kelly's force ;* but the rest were mercilessly put to the sword.⁶⁴

At Buni Jones found the native officer and the thirty-three men who had been left there. He did not think it prudent to try and push through the Mastuj, as he was told that the enemy were collected in force at Nisa Gol. He therefore put the post into as good a position for defence as he could, and awaited for the attack which he expected every hour would be made. Strange to say, the Chitralis never came near them, probably hoping that troops would be sent to their assistance,

63. Thomson, H.C, pp. 109-111.

* See the following pages with regard to Kelly's march to Chitral.

64. Thomson, H.C, pp. 109-111.

and they might be able to cut them all off together.⁶⁵

Lieutenant Moberly arrived from Mastuj on the 17th, exactly a week later, with a hundred and fifty of the Kashmir Rifles and fifty of the Punyali levies, and Jones together with his men marched back with him to Mastuj, where Captain Brether-ton had been left with only sixty Kashmir Rifles.⁶⁶

Immediately after Moberly's return the enemy closed in round the Mastuj post, and invested it closely, building sangars on the surrounding hills, and keeping up a constant desultory fire. They were about 15 hundred in number, and were under the command of Mohamed Isa Khan, who had come up from Rashun after his treacherous capture of Edwardes and Fowler. Why they did not attack Jones at Buni is quite inexplicable. Probably they expected that he should try and get to Mastuj, and meant to attack him somewhere on the march where they could take him at a disadvantage.

Be that as it may, here at Mastuj they surrounded the post with a view probably to starving the garrison into submission. But before they could achieve anything tangible, Colonel Kelly's troops appeared and they had to leave the place in haste.⁶⁷ Of the sixty men who had thus started from Karagh, Ross and forty-six men were killed, and of the remaining fourteen,⁶⁸ ten were wounded.⁶⁹

The Situation Altered

The intelligence relative to these developments in the Gilgit Agency, the fate that befell Captain Ross and Lieutenant Edwardes, and the troops with them, materially altered the situation. It was now known to the government of India that before they had despatched troops from Peshawar for the relief of Chitral, Umra Khan and Sher Afzul had actually waged war upon British Indian and Kashmir

65. Lt. W.G.L. Beynon, p. 87 ; Thomson. H.C, p. 111.

66. Government of India, Fgn, (Sec-Front), to H.H. Fowler, No. 66, April 17, 1895, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, July 1895, Nos. 1-433; Thomson, H.C, p. 112.

67. Thomson, H.C, pp. 112-113 ; Lt. W.G.L. Beynon, p. 188.

68. RK to Fgn, Calcutta, No. 16 J, March 21, 1895, Elgin Papers, MSS: EUR F 84/73 EXP 240.

69. Thomson, H.C, p. 113.

troops. The necessity for relieving the little garrison in Chitral was now felt to be more imminent than had been supposed, while the reason for giving Umra Khan a period of grace within which he might withdraw from Chitral had disappeared.⁷⁰

An order was therefore telegraphed on March 21 to Colonel G. J. Kelly, commanding the 32nd Pioneers, the senior military officer in the Gilgit district,⁷¹ to march at once, and as rapidly as possible, to Chitral.⁷² It was, however, felt that the relief of Chitral from the side of Gilgit was probably impossible. Gilgit was 220 miles from Chitral, and at this season of the year was cut off from all support from India, by Passes 13,000 feet in height, which were now covered deep in snow, and which could not become available for the passage of troops till June. On the other hand, the road from Peshawar to Chitral was less than 200 miles in length, and on it there was only one Pass of 10,000 feet which would still have snow upon it. This Pass was not altogether impracticable for any army. Orders were therefore simultaneously issued for the despatch of the Chitral Relief Force under Sir Robert Low, as soon as it could be made ready. Sir Robert Low was to follow the Peshawar-Chitral route.⁷³

The Siege of Chitral

It is now necessary to return to Robertson and his escort. He had occupied the Chitral fort and was being threatened by the forces of Sher Afzul and Umra Khan. On the 3rd of March, at about 4.30 P.M. news was received by him that Sher Afzul with a large force, was approaching.⁷⁴ Captain Colin Campbell, of the Central India Horse, and, for the time, Inspecting Officer of the Kashmir Imperial Service Troops, was

70. Government of India, Fgn, (Sec-Front), to H.H. Fowler, No. 66, April 17, 1895, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, July 1895, Nos. 1-433.

71. Government of India, Fgn, (Sec-Front), to H.H. Fowler No. 66, April, 17, 1895, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, July 1895, Nos. 1-433 ; Younghusband and Younghusband, p. 20.

72. Thomson, H.C, p. 116.

73. Younghusband and Younghusband, p. 21.

74. Captain C.V.F. Townshend to Lt-Col A. Durand, April 25, 1895 Elgin Papers, MSS EUR F 84/73, EXP 240.

in command of the troops now in Chitral; and, late in the afternoon though it was, he thought it necessary to go out with a strong reconnoitring force to ascertain the strength and intentions of the Chitrali force. Hostilities between the British and the Chitralis had not yet commenced, and with a large armed force advancing towards the fort it was necessary for the British garrison to take every precaution against being caught unawares by them. Two hundred Kashmir Infantry under Captains Campbell, Townshend, and Baird, and accompanied by the British Agent, Surgeon—Major Robertson, Lieutenant Gurdon, and Captain Whitchurch, therefore, set out from the fort to reconnoitre the Chitrali dispositions.⁷⁵

There was no regular town of Chitral, but round the fort, which was merely the residence of the Mehtars, there were scattered over the valley a number of little hamlets and detached houses, dotted over the cultivated lands which stretched for a distance of about three miles down the valley. These cultivated lands were on some gently sloping ground, from a mile to a mile and a half in width, which ran down from the high, steep hillsides on the right bank to the Chitral river.⁷⁶

Leaving fifty men in the serai, a quarter of a mile from the fort, and detaching a section under Captain Baird, which Lieutenant Gurdon accompanied, to ascend the hill-sides on the right, Captains Campbell and Townshend advanced for a mile and a half down the valley, towards a house in which it was stated that Sher Afzul had established himself. On arrival at the house it was found that Sher Afzul was not in it, and Captain Townshend then advanced still further down the valley, while Captain Baird's flanking party was strengthened by an additional twenty-five men. Captain Townshend could see a number of men moving about among the trees and houses of a hamlet 500 yards beyond the house which it had been supposed Sher Afzul was occupying; and on the hill-sides which Baird's party were ascending there were some hundreds of the Chitralis. On these hill-slopes firing now commenced, and Captain Townshend concluding that the men

75. Younghusband and Younghusband, pp. 92-100.

76. *Ibid.*, p. 100.

he could see in the front moving about in the hamlet were the enemy, opened fire with a section volley. The fire was immediately returned by the enemy, who, being armed with Martini-Henry and Snider rifles, made most excellent shooting.⁷⁷

Captain Townshend kept his men under cover as much as possible, and, taking advantage of the boulders and low walls which surrounded the fields, advanced to within 200 yards or so of the hamlet. There was now no more cover in his front, many of his men were hit, and he could see the hamlet towards which he was advancing now crowded with men who were keeping up a well-sustained fire from the walls and loopholes. To advance with the hundred men he had with him, and these not veteran troops of the British army, but untried Kashmir troops armed with worn-out Snider rifles,⁷⁸ against superior numbers of a better armed and more experienced force posted behind walls was an impossibility, and Captain Townshend decided therefore to hold his ground until Captain Baird should move along the hill-slopes to the Westward, and so turn the hamlet, and when Baird had done this Townshend would then advance to attack it in front.

But time went on, and Townshend could see no signs of Baird advancing on his flank. On the other hand, small parties of the tribesmen began to overlap him on both flanks, and to enfilade him with their fire. His position was now becoming untenable; it was half-past six and would soon be dark, so decisive action of some sort—either an advance or a retirement—must be carried out at once. At this juncture Captain Campbell arrived, and directed that the hamlet should be stormed. The order to reinforce was given, but the support of men in rear did not come up, though the order was continually repeated. Captain Campbell then went back himself to bring up the support, while Captain Townshend fixed bayonets preparatory to a charge, and kept up a heavy independent fire.⁷⁹

77. GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, July 1895, Nos. 1103-1121 ; Younghusband and Younghusband, pp. 100-101.

78. Younghusband and Younghusband, p. 101.

79. *Ibid.*, p. 102.

The bayonet charge was gallantly led by Captain Townshend, General Baj Singh and Major Bhikam Singh, but it could not be carried home, the terrain being entirely open and devoid of cover, and the fire of the enemy being steady, well-aimed, and continuous.⁸⁰ Two of their leaders, General Baj Singh and Major Bhikam Singh lost their lives; while the former was killed at once, the latter was mortally wounded.⁸¹ And many sepoy were also done to death by the tribesmen. It was found, too, on getting up to within forty yards of the hamlet, which was concealed in a grove of trees, that it was in reality a large village with a wall over three hundred feet in length, behind which the tribesmen were ensconced, and which afforded the most complete shelter.⁸²

There was nothing for it but to retreat. Captain Campbell at this moment was shot in the knee, and Captain Townshend assumed the command. He had Captain Campbell and Major Bhikam Singh carried to the rear, and then retired the men by alternate parties, one half being ordered to keep up a hot fire on the loopholes of the hamlet, whilst the other ran off in twos and threes to more sheltered ground. The retreat was conducted very slowly and deliberately, though the enemy, who came running out, soon overlapped the little column on both flanks, some even getting behind it, whilst little knots of fanatical swordsmen from time to time charged furiously down upon it. The retreating troops were fired at from all the hamlets, from behind the shelter of orchards and houses—from right and left, front and rear. There was nothing for it but to double. Townshend was able to rally his sepoy without difficulty at a small hamlet, where he found the British Agent steadying and encouraging a few men whom he had gathered together. A message had been sent to Lieutenant Harley in the fort to bring out fifty of the Sikhs, and to the steady behaviour of these splendid soldiers, and to the coolness and gallantry of Captain Townshend, must be attributed the fact that the retreat did not generate into a rout,

80. Thomson, H.C., p. 37.

81. Captain C.V.F. Townshend to Lt-Col A. Durand, April 25, 1895, Elgin Papers, MSS, EUR, F 84/73 EXP 240.

82. Thomson, H.C, pp. 37-38.

and the rout into a massacre. It was nearly eight P.M. before the fort was reached.⁸³

The total casualties of the day were very heavy. Of the one hundred and fifty men actually engaged,⁸⁴ twenty non-commissioned officers and men were killed and twenty-eight wounded, and of the officers, Captain Campbell was badly wounded, and Captain Baird, General Baj Singh, and Major Bhikam Singh were killed. The strength of the tribal force was computed to be from one thousand to twelve hundred men, five hundred of whom were said to be Jandulis.⁸⁵

The above account leads us to the conclusion that the action of the British force was not a reconnaissance, but a venturesome attempt to capture or kill Sher Afzul and his troops who were stated to be living in the house towards which the onslaught was directed. It, however, failed for, the garrison had to encounter an intrepid enemy in vastly superior numbers, armed with better weapons, and ensconced behind walls and trunks of trees. And the grisly and hideous episode bespeaks that the British officers in Chitral had well-nigh no knowledge of the geography of that State.

On the fourth of March, the tribal force closed in around the fort, and the siege began in earnest, the whole population of Chitral seeming to have joined Sher Afzul. Robertson, in his report to the government of India, after the close of the siege, says, "our position, though very difficult, was not hopeless till after the disaster of March 3rd, but after that unfortunate event, all the Chitralis outside the fort were compelled to join Sher Afzul for fear of their families."⁸⁶

The fort was about eighty yards square, with walls about twenty-five feet high and eight feet thick. It was situated on the right bank of the river, which flowed here north and south,

83. *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.

84. Captain C.V.F. Townshend to Lt-Col A. Durand, April 25, 1895, Elgin Papers, MSS, EUR, F 84/73 EXP 240.

85. GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, July 1895, Nos. 1103-1121; Viceroy to Queen Empress, April 25, 1895, No. 21, Elgin Papers, MSS 84/12 (1894); Thomson, H.C, p. 43.

86. British Agency, Gilgit, Diary from the 1st of March to the 19th of April, 1895, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, July 1895, Nos. 1103-1121; Thomson, H.C, p. 44.

and was at a distance of fifty yards from it. At each corner of it there was a tower, rising twenty feet above the wall. Outside the north face there was a fifth tower to guard the way to the river. On the east face there was a garden which extended about 140 yards, and some forty yards from the south-east tower there was a summer-house. On the north and west faces there were stables and other outhouses.

The walls were made of stone and it was fortunate that there was a cradlework of wooden beams, placed longitudinally and transversely, which kept them together.⁸⁷

As Robertson and the garrison soon found, the fort was no ideal place for defence, even if the enemy were without Artillery. Round it on all sides were giant trees, from the tops of which snipers could fire down into the interior. This necessitated the construction of bullet-proof barriers behind the men at the fire-slits, and, for this purpose, planks, doors, mule saddles, boxes, and sacks of earth were employed. When materials for cover from fire ran out, tenting, carpets, and curtains were hung up to give cover from view.⁸⁸

But the position in which the fort stood was a grave defect which could not be removed by the garrison. It was in a hollow in the lowest part of the valley, which did not broaden out for some way further down, and which was commanded from the hills around it from literally every point of the compass. The tribesmen built sangars along the sides of these hills, and also had strong position in the village of Danin, which was to the north of the fort on the other side of the river, and only 600 yards off; in the house of the newswriter, Rab Nawaz Khan, which was to the south-east about a thousand yards off and on higher ground than the fort which it therefore commanded; in the serai or village, which was about 600 yards up the hillside to the south; and in the Political Officer's house, which was still further up the hill behind it, about twelve hundred yards distant, and was a large oblong building with a walled garden and enclosed court, standing on the high bank of a stream.⁸⁹

87. C.V.F. Townshend to Lt-Col A. Durand, April 25, 1895, Elgin Papers, MSS, EUR, F 84/73 EXP 240; Younghusband and Younghusband, pp. 110-112.

88. *Ibid.*, also Swinson, Arthur, *North-West Frontier*, 1967, pp. 209-210.

89. Thomson, H.C, pp. 53-54.

Sher Afzul established his headquarters in the Political Officer's house, and his men occupied the house of Rab Nawaz Khan. Both of these houses, and also the serai were within easy Martini and Snider range of the fort, and from all of them a constant fusillade was maintained against the garrison.⁹⁰

An essential thing that had to be done was of course to take stock of the stores, and estimate for how many days the garrison was rationed. This was done, and every one put on half rations; and it was calculated that they could hold out for two and a half months, or until about the middle of June. It was also found that they had 280 rounds per man of Snidar ammunition for the 4th Kashmir Rifles, and 300 rounds per man of Martini ammunition for the Sikhs. Captain Campbell's wound was a bad one, so Captain Townshend as the next senior officer assumed the command.⁹¹

The first attack on the garrison developed on the night of the 7th of March, and its object proved to be the waterway. The attacking force included several hundreds of Umra Khan's Jandulis, who had spent most of their lives attacking similar forts, and it was invariably their practice to begin with the water supply. Fire was opened from the trees on the north-west front of the fort, then a party rushed forward to effect an entry into the water tower. This they succeeded in doing, then a second party rushed forward with faggots which they set fire to. Meanwhile the garrison brought a heavy fire to bear, the sections firing in volleys, and the attackers were driven off. By now the fire was blazing and the whole tower was in danger. But Townshend had detailed a party with buckets, and when this came into action the flames were brought under control.⁹² After this special precautions were taken to protect the waterway. A picquet of twenty-five men was stationed in the tower, and at night an additional picquet of twenty-five more men was placed inside the waterway also, that being the weakest and most exposed position in the fort.⁹³

90. *Ibid.*, pp. 44-45.

91. Captain C.V.F. Townshend to Lt-Col A. Durand, April 25, 1895, Elgin Papers, MSS EUR F 84/73 EXP 240; Younghusband and Younghusband, p. 109; Thomson, H.C, p. 46.

92. GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, July 1895, Nos. 1103-1121; Younghusband and Younghusband, pp. 112-113.

93. Thomson, H.C, p. 58.

On the night of the 13th the besiegers again made an attack on the waterway, but were repulsed with considerable loss. On the 14th and 15th continuous firing went on, but nothing of importance happened. On the 15th, however, a letter was received from Sher Afzul saying that a party of sepoys had been defeated at Reshun, and on the following day he forwarded a letter from Lieutenant Edwardes stating that he and Lieutenant Fowler, with forty Kashmir Rifles and twenty Bengal Sappers, were besieged at Reshun, and that after several days' fighting they had concluded a truce with the enemy.

On the same day a truce for three days at Chitral itself was agreed to by Sher Afzul, which was afterwards extended till the 23rd. On the 20th, Edwardes and Fowler* were brought into Sher Afzul's camp, and Robertson was allowed to send his representatives to talk to them. The two officers explained that they had been attacked at Reshun, and after holding out for nine days, had been treacherously made prisoners by their besiegers. Robertson thereupon wrote to Umra Khan protesting against the violation of a flag truce, and requesting him at once to release his prisoners. Edwardes and Fowler in the meantime had been taken down to Drosh, and Umra Khan sent a reply from there, in which he said that he had told the sahibs if they wished it he would send them back to the fort, but that they had refused to go.⁹⁴

On the 23rd March Umra Khan's Diwan came to ask whether the British Agent would retire his troops through Jandul to Peshawar, and being told that he would not, the truce was declared to be at an end. A few days later Umra Khan, who had received disquieting news of the advance of an English force through Swat and Bajaur, and that Jandul itself was threatened, made a hurried retreat over the Lowarai Pass, taking Edwardes and Fowler and other British prisoners with him.⁹⁵

The remaining part of the story of the siege of the Chitral fort and its ultimate relief is told in the next chapter.

* These officers, as stated above, had been treacherously captured at Reshun.

94. Captain C.V.F. Townshend to Lt-Col A. Durand, April 25, 1895, Elgin Papers, MSS EUR F 84/73 EXP 240 ; Thomson, H.C, pp. 61-63.

95. Captain C.V.F. Townshend to Lt-Col A. Durand, April 25, 1895, Elgin Papers, MSS EUR F 84/73 EXP 240 ; Thomson, H.C., p. 63.

The Chitral Imbroglia of 1895— (Contd.)

The Two-pronged Attack

In the last Chapter we have seen that the government of India had, on March 21, 1895, telegraphically instructed Colonel G.J. Kelly, the senior military officer in the Gilgit district at the time, to march at once and as rapidly as possible to Chitral to relieve the garrison there. We have also seen that the government of India had, at the same time, issued orders for the despatch from Peshawar of the Chitral Relief Force under Sir Robert Low, as soon as it could be made ready.

Accordingly, Colonel Kelly left Gilgit with an advance party on the morning of the 23rd of March, 1895, the rear-guard having to wait for No. I Kashmir Mountain Battery, which arrived from Nomal that afternoon, and followed Kelly the day after. The advance party consisted of two hundred of the 32nd Pioneers under Captain Borradaile, Lieutenant Bethune the Adjutant, Lieutenant Cobbe, and Surgeon—Captain Browning Smith ; and the rear-guard of two hundred more men of the 32nd Pioneers, under Lieutenants Peterson and Cooke, two guns of No. I Kashmir Mountain Battery, and a hundred men levied from Hunza-Nagar and Punial, under the command respectively of Humayun, the Prime Minister of Hunza, and Akbar Khan, the Raja of Punial.¹

When the advance party reached Ghizar, where they found

1. Government of India, Fgn, (Sec-Front), to H.H. Fowler, No. 66, April 17, 1895, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, July 1895 Nos. 1-433; Lt. W.G.L. Beynon, pp. 14-17; Thomson, H.C., pp. 116-119; Younghusband and Younghusband, p. 138.

Captain de Vismes, the Gilgit settlement officer in charge, it had been snowing hard for five days. It was impossible to get on, so they waited for the rear-guard to come up, which it did on the following day. It had been joined at Gupis by Lieutenant Stewart, who took charge of the guns, by Lieutenant Oldham, with forty Kashmir Sappers, and by Lieutenant Gough with 100 Kashmir Rifles.²

On April 1, 1895, in spite of the snow, the whole column started for the Shandur Pass. When they had gone about four miles the Battery mules stuck hopelessly in the snow. After doing all they could to get them along, it was found that in two hours they had only gone a few hundred yards, and it was evidently useless to try to advance until the weather cleared a little. Part of the force therefore returned to Ghizar, where they could obtain food and shelter, but Borrodaile was left at a hamlet called Teru to make another attempt. He had with him 200 of the Pioneers, Oldham and his forty Sappers, Wazir Humayun with the Hunza levies, all the coolie transport belonging to the force, and rations for ten days.³

Heavy snow fell all the next day, and it was impossible to move. It was bitterly cold, and the men, who had no tents and only their great-coats, suffered terribly. Colonel Kelly, however, sent Stewart and Gough on from Ghizar with the guns, and after a very severe march they managed to get through to Teru.

The following morning, April 3, the whole of the Borrodaile's party started for Langar at the foot of the Pass, the guns being partly carried by the men and partly dragged on the sledges. Langar was only five miles from Teru, but they did not get there till eleven at night, the snow was so deep. It was a bare plateau 9,000 feet in height, at the foot of the ascent to the Pass. There was no shelter there of any kind; not even rocks behind which the men could shelter themselves from the bitterly cold wind. They had to stay out all night on the open snow, crowding round wretchedly small fires, for there was

2. Lt. W.G.L. Beynon, p. 28; Thomson, H.C., p. 122; Younghusband and Younghusband, p. 139.

3. Lt. W.G.L. Beynon, p. 30; Thomson, H.C., p. 125; Younghusband and Younghusband, pp. 141-142.

scarcely any firewood to be had.⁴

Early the next morning Borrodaile and the Pioneers started with Oldham and his Sappers and the Hunza levies to try and get over the Pass. Stewart and the guns had to be left behind, for it was hopeless to move them until a path of some kind had been trodden through the snow. Borrodaile, with great difficulty, managed to struggle across to Laspur on the other side of the Pass, where he entrenched himself, and waited for the rest of the force to come up. His achievement was a very fine one. Had the Chitralis occupied the pass they might have stopped the force from getting across at all, for it would have been very difficult to make use of the guns in the deep snow. But they never dreamt that the troops would attempt to cross in such a severe weather, and were quite taken by surprise.⁵

Stewart and Gough came over with the guns on the following day, the men again partly carrying them and partly bringing them on sledges. They suffered abysmally from snow-blindedness and from frost-bite. On the 6th of April, Colonel Kelly and Lieutenant Beynon, too, came across to Laspur with the remaining fifty of the levies, leaving the rest of the Pioneers to follow as soon as possible. Borrodaile and Stewart were sent that afternoon to reconnoitre towards Gasht, twelve miles distant, the guns being carried by coolies. The troops were, however, exhausted and it was decided that the 7th would be devoted to rest. On the 8th the whole column would move on again, its objective being Gasht.⁶

Now it is necessary to leave Colonel Kelly for a while and return to the Chitral Relief Force which, in accordance with the government of India's orders, was to march to Chitral from Peshawar. This force consisted of 14,000 men and was mobilised at Nowshera and Hoti Mardan, on the Peshawar frontier.

4. Lt. W.G.L. Beynon, pp. 30-31; Thomson, H.C, pp. 125-126; Young, husband and Younghusband, p. 144.

5. Government of India to SSI, No. 325, April 12, 1895, Elgin Papers, Reel No. 4, NAI; Thomson, H.C, pp. 125-126; Young, husband and Younghusband, p. 144.

6. Government of India to SSI, No. 325, April 12, 1895, Elgin Papers, Reel No. 4, NAI, Thomson, H.C., pp. 127-128; Young, husband and Younghusband, pp. 147-148.

Major-General Sir Robert Low was appointed to command it. Brigadier-General Bindon Blood, being the Chief of the staff, and Lieutenant Colonel J.H.S. Craigie, the Assistant Adjutant-General. The three Brigades were commanded by Brigadier-General A.A. Kinlock, Brigadier-General H.S. Waterfield and Brigadier-General W.F. Gatacre respectively. Major Deane accompanied the force as chief political officer. This force was to march straight to Chitral, through Swat and other tribal territories.⁷

The British frontier at Peshawar was crossed by three main Passes, all leading into the Swat valley. These Passes, in order from east to west, were the Mora Pass, the Shahkot Pass, and the Malakand.⁸

On the first of April, in accordance with Low's plan, the 1st Brigade camped near the Shahkot Pass, while a party of cavalry pushed ahead towards the Mora Pass, with the object of stirring up the dust to deceive the tribesmen, who, in disregard of the proclamation made to them earlier, had strongly held all the three Passes mentioned above.⁹ Meanwhile, the main body moved up towards the Malakand Pass, reaching a point about twenty miles from it on the afternoon of the 1st of April. Low intended that the column should march to a forming-up position next morning, then attack in the afternoon, but Bindon Blood argued that it was unwise; the Malakand was a strong position, and should be attacked by fresh troops on the morning of the 3rd. Low would not listen to this argument, however, maintaining that the important thing was to get on; but that night there was a violent storm which blew down all the tents, and made the horses stampede. A delay was therefore inevitable, while the troops sorted themselves and dried their clothing.¹⁰

7. Viceroy to SSI, No. 284, April 4, 1895, Elgin Papers, Reel No. 4, NAI; Government of India, Fgn, (Sec-Front) to H.H. Fowler, No. 66, April 17, 1895, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, July 1895, Nos. 1-433; Thomson, H.C., p. 156; Sir George Robertson, p. 184; Younghusband and Younghusband, pp. 61-62.

8. Younghusband and Younghusband, p. 63.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 63-64.

10. Thomson, H.C, p. 161; Swinson, Arthur, *North-West Frontier*, hereafter quoted as Swinson Arthur, p. 217.

"The Malakand", wrote Winston Churchill, who was to fight in a battle there two years later, "is like a great cup, of which the rim is broken into numerous clefts, and jagged points."¹¹ It was a very strong position, one of the reasons being that it was impossible to concentrate enough troops in the area at the bottom of the cup, and those that could be fitted in were in full view of the surrounding heights.¹² Low's plan to cope with this situation was to launch two Battalions against the extreme right of the tribesmen's position, under cover of a concentration by twenty mountain guns. The Infantry from the next Brigade would then advance up the spurs towards the enemy's main position, on as broad a front as possible.

The operation went like clockwork. The detailed Artillery programme allowed for a moving curtain of shrapnel, ahead of the Infantry, and this was so heavy and so accurate that the tribesmen were completely unable to concentrate. Small parties of them came charging down the hillside, but these were soon dealt with by the Infantry, who had kept their formation as on parade and fired devastatingly in volleys. Two Battalions were now concentrating on the main positions, while two more pursued the enemy round a flank into the Swat valley. Soon they were joined by the cavalry, and then guns raced forward, across tracks quickly prepared by the Sappers, and peppered the tribesmen as they ran.¹³

By 2 P.M. it was all over. Two thousand men of the tribal force were despatched or wounded, and 10,000 were dispersed. British loss was eleven men killed, and eight officers and thirty-nine men wounded.¹⁴

On the 4th April the Division moved into the Swat valley, but soon it was observed that large numbers of tribesmen were gathering—probably those who had been guarding the Mora and Shahkot Passes. In the afternoon they came down from the hills in a spirited charge, but the Guides cavalry had been

11. Swinson, Arthur, p. 218.

12. Viceroy to SSI, telegram No. 283, April 4, 1895, Elgin Papers, Reel No. 4, NAI; Thomson, H.C., p. 162.

13. Viceroy to SSI, telegram No. 283, April 4, 1895, Elgin Papers, Reel No. 4, NAI; Younghusband and Younghusband, pp. 65-68

14. Thomson, H.C, p. 165; Swinson, Arthur, p. 218.

moved into position for just such an action, and drawing their swords, galloped across the valley to catch the tribesmen in the open. Large numbers were killed, and the rest streamed back to the hills as fast as their legs would carry them.¹⁵

On the 5th Bindon Blood rode forward with a covering party to reconnoitre the next obstacle—the Swat river. Though this was fordable in several places, the current, so he discovered, was strong, and it would be necessary to build a bridge so that communication and supplies could get across. The following day Brigadier-General Waterfield took his Brigade forward to force a crossing, and did the job neatly and economically. Engaging the enemy at long range with his Artillery and Infantry, he sent the Guides Cavalry and 11th Bengal Lancers, supported by the 15th Sikhs, round a flank to cross at a little known ford. The water was deep here, and the men had to half swim and half wade across. However, they were eventually formed up on the farther bank, and began their move on the tribesmen's flank. The latter, seeing they had been outwitted, began streaming from their posts, and a body of horsemen, which included Umra Khan's brother, Mohammed Shah Khan, galloped hard towards the hills. He got away, but 400 of his followers did not, and when the cavalry rode back every man had one or two swords picked up from fallen tribesmen. While this action was going on, Waterfield's main body crossed at Chakdara.

On the 7th the tribesmen retired to the north. Low's next obstacle was the Panjkora river, for beyond that lay Jandul and Umra Khan's stronghold at Munda.¹⁶

At this stage it may now be necessary to pick up the story of Robertson and the garrison from the point at which we left it in the last Chapter. They were still struggling on without news from the outside world. On the 24th of March it began raining in torrents, and after some hours there was a subsidence in the western wall of the fort. This obviously had to be repaired before nightfall, and great hulks of timber were lifted into position and secured. The whole garrison was wet and

15. Thomson, H.C, pp. 173-174.

16. Younghusband and Younghusband, pp. 73-76; Swinson Arthur, pp. 218-219; Thomson, H.C, p. 185.

miserable at this time, and especially during the two days which followed, with the rain still continuing. The only thing to cheer them was a story from some of the sepoys that they had heard distant Artillery fire, but, when the officers listened and heard nothing, spirits drooped again.¹⁷

On the 27th there was a good deal of firing, but no attack materialised. The 28th was the Mohammedan feast called Eed and the besiegers were otherwise occupied. On the 30th an ammunition check showed that the garrison was down to 29,224 rounds. The grain stocks were now 45,000 pounds, or up to the 13th of June.¹⁸

On the 3rd of April, while Low and his Division were fighting the battle at Malakand Pass, and Kelly's men were struggling in the Shandur Pass, the garrison's only recorded activity was negotiating with Sher Afzul. The latter was now threatening that the siege would be pressed home. Nothing happened, however till the morning of the 5th when the army bugle made a reappearance, and firing broke out all around the fort. This was to cover the occupation of the summer-house. The garrison's reply was to start loop-holding the tower facing this, and they were soon able to keep up a steady fire against the summer-house.¹⁹

The next major development came at about 5 a.m. on the 7th when the tribesmen opened a terrific fire upon the walls of the fort. They advanced with wild outcries, and were evidently in great strength. In an instant every one in the fort was at his post, and steady volleys were poured into the darkness on the garden side of the fort, the direction whence the chief attack seemed to be coming, and the inlying picquet were posted near the main gate ready for any emergency that might arise. Suddenly a strong light was seen near the gun tower or south-east tower. It had been fired by the tribesmen, by placing lighted faggots against the tower wall, which being made almost as much of wood as of stone, readily took fire. Robertson,

17. Younghusband and Younghusband, p. 119.

18. *Ibid.*

19. Captain C.V.F. Townshend to Lt-Col A. Durand, April 25, 1895, Elgin Papers, MSS, EUR F 84/73 EXP 240; Swinson Arthur, p. 220.

with the Punialis, and what may be termed the odds and ends of the garrison, horsekeepers and servants, at once went off to endeavour to extinguish it. Every one else remained quietly at his place, for the firing of the gun tower might have been only a feint to divert attention from an attack on the water-way. But as this did not seem to be a case, the inlying picquet was soon afterwards sent by Townshend to carry up water and earth in their greatcoats. A terrible struggle now ensued for getting the fire under control, and by ten a.m. it was altogether subdued and the enemy driven off.²⁰

Townshend now took very careful precautions to prevent a similar attempt being made to fire any of the other towers. He had earth and buckets of water stored in the basements and upper stories of each tower, and along the parapets. Mounds of earth were placed in the courtyard, and large holes were dug in the ground there as reservoirs for water. He also arranged a special fire picquet of Punialis. So ended the fifth week of the siege.

On the other hand, on the 8th of April, as mentioned earlier, Colonel Kelly's column started for Gasht, which was reached that evening without opposition, but a reconnoitring party brought back word that the enemy were at Chaklewat, a few miles below. So the next morning Beynon was sent with fifty levies up the hills to the left, and the Hunza men under Wazir Humayun up those to the right, the rest of the force proceeding slowly along the road down the valley.²¹

About eleven O'clock Beynon's party were seen on the hillside flanking the enemy, and the guns opened on the enemy's sangars, who were unable to face the shells and fell back hurriedly to another line of sangars, a little to the rear. The guns were advanced and again brought to bear upon them, when they fled precipitately towards Mastuj, leaving twenty-five

20. Captain C.V.F. Townshend to Lt-Col A. Durand, April 25, 1895, Elgin Papers, MSS EUR F 84/73 EXP 240; Thomson, H.C, pp. 69-74; Younghusband and Younghusband, pp. 122-124.

21. Government of India to SSI, No. 325, April 12, 1895, Elgin Papers, Reel No. 4, NAI; Government of India, Fgn, (Sec-Front), to H.H. Fowler, No. 66, April 17, 1895, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, July 1895, Nos. 1-433; Thomson, H.C, p. 128; Younghusband and Younghusband, pp. 149-150.

killed and fifty wounded, Colonel Kelly's force having five men wounded, but none killed.²²

Colonel Kelly's force then advanced to Mastuj, and on arrival there found the garrison, who had been under investment for eighteen days past, well. The tribesmen, at the approach of this force, raised the siege and fled towards Chitral. On the 12th of April Lieutenant Beynon made a reconnaissance down the road to Chitral, and found that the enemy had taken up a strong position at Nisa Gol, about a mile to the north of the village of Sanoghar, eight miles below, so the whole of the troops advanced against them on the following morning, April 13th.²³

At Nisa Gol the Chitralis had constructed many sangars. There was no cover of any kind on the plain as Keliy's troops marched, so they came full under the fire from these sangars. The position of the Chitralis was so strong that if they had stuck to it doggedly they must have inflicted dire damage before they could have been dislodged, but they could not stand the Artillery fire, to which they were not accustomed. They left the sangars and fled across the plain to their rear.²⁴

They were commanded by Mohammed Isa Khan, and were estimated to have been about 1,500 in number. They suffered a loss of 50 dead and many wounded. Colonel Kelly's force had seven men killed and twelve wounded.²⁵

The next day, April 14th, it was found that the road in front had been cut, so a long march of over twenty miles was made over the tops of the hills to Drasan. The fort there was found to be empty, and the village deserted. The manoeuvre

22. Viceroy to SSI, No. 342, April 15, 1895, Elgin Papers, Reel No. 4, NAI; Thomson, H.C, p. 128; Youghusband and Younghusband, pp. 151-154.

23. Viceroy to SSI, No. 342, April 15, 1895, Elgin Papers, Reel No. 4, NAI; Thomson, H.C, pp. 132-135; Youghusband and Younghusband, pp. 154-155.

24. Viceroy to SSI, No. 342, April 15, 1895, Elgin Papers, Reel No. 4; NAI; Viceroy to SSI, No. 353, April 17, 1895, Elgin Papers, Reel No. 4, NAI. For details see Thomson, H.C, pp. 135-139 and Younghusband Younghusband, pp. 160-165.

25. Viceroy to SSI, No. 379, April 25, 1895, Elgin Papers, Reel No. 4, NAI; Thomson, H.C, p. 141; Youghusband and Younghusband, p. 165.

proved a very successful one. The Chitralis had expected that the force would take the same route through Karagh that Ross had taken, and were completely discomfited by this unexpected detour.²⁶

Meanwhile there had been a clash between Low's column and Umra Khan. On the 12th April the Sappers managed to fling a rough foot bridge, made of logs and telegraph wires, over the Panjkora river, and the Guides Infantry advanced across it to the western bank. During the night, however, and before more troops were able to join them, the bridge was swept away. Major Fenton Aylmer, V.C.; R.E; now came forward with a suspension bridge, which, so he warned Low, would take forty-eight hours to erect and tow into position. While the work was going on the Guides were ordered to move forward and destroy some enemy positions a few miles ahead. When they attempted this task, however, they came under a heavy rifle fire from Umra Khan's men and had to retire. But Low had put some Infantry into a position from which fire could be brought down on the tribesmen's flank and the Guides escaped without heavy losses. But, to their great sadness, the commanding officer, Colonel Battye, was killed while conducting the withdrawal.²⁷

On the 17th Bindon Blood rode forward, with an escort of Guides cavalry and the Lancers, to reconnoitre Umra Khan's fortress at Munda, in Jandul valley. Here he caught sight of a man who was ploughing his fields near the village of Miankilai, over to the left. From him Blood came to know that Umra Khan and his army were at Munda Fort and Miankilai village respectively. Blood then wrote a letter to Umra Khan telling him that he would be wise to surrender. The main column would be arriving in two hours, and then he would have to decide whether to fight and be destroyed, surrender himself, or escape over the Afghan border: If he took the first or third courses, his life would be short; if he

26. Viceroy to SSI, No. 273, April 23, 1895, Elgin Papers, Reel No. 4, NAI; Thomson, H.C, p. 142; Younghusband and Younghusband, p. 166.

27. Viceroy to SSI, No. 334, April 14, 1895, Elgin Papers, Reel No. 4, NAI; Swinson Arthur, pp. 223-224.

took the second, however, Blood would see that he was well treated. The letter was sent to Umra Khan by the hand of the ploughman. The latter came back in an hour with a letter from the former. Umra Khan replied that he would be glad to surrender, but the cut-throats around him would not permit this.²⁸

“You too I notice are accompanied by those cut-throats of yours”, he continued, referring to the Guides, “Assuredly no quiet conversation can take place under these circumstances. Now I would propose that you send away your cut-throats and I will send away mine, and then you and I can have our conference alone in the field.”²⁹

This seemed quite friendly, but, looking up, Blood could see that the tribesmen were moving forward to extend their position and were already threatening his cavalry on the flanks. Any meeting now was obviously out of the question. It was at this stage that Brigadier-General Gatacre arrived with his Brigade, the 11th Bengal Lancers, and the Derajat Mountain Battery, and was followed soon by General Low.³⁰

Directly Low arrived he ordered the Mountain Battery to open fire, which they did. Umra Khan's men retired hurriedly and Gatacre followed them up till evening. By then they were far away in the Nawagai valley. Next morning, when Low and his staff rode forward, they found the Munda fort abandoned; and spies came in reporting that Umra Khan himself had crossed the Afghan border with his personal escort and eleven mule loads of gold, silver and jewels.³¹

All opposition was now at an end, and nothing remained but to march on Chitral and congratulate the gallant little garrison on their successful defence. The Buffs, a company of the 4th Gurkhas, and No. 2 (Derajat) Mountain Battery were deputed to push on over the Lowarai Pass to Chitral under General

28. Younghusband and Younghusband, pp. 89-90; Swinson Arthur, pp. 224-225.

29. Younghusband and Younghusband, p. 90.

30. Viceroy to SSI, No. 356, April 18, 1895, Elgin Papers, Reel No. 4, NAI; Younghusband and Younghusband, p. 90.

31. Viceroy to SSI, No. 360, April 19, 1895, Elgin Papers, Reel No. 4, NAI; Younghusband and Younghusband, pp. 90-91; Swinson Arthur, pp. 225-226.

Gatacre with ten days supplies, while the remainder of the force guarded the line of communication.³²

On the 17th of April, the day that Umra Khan fled across the border, Kelly forded the Chitral river at a point where it was breast-high but with a swift current. The sepoy's linked hands, making a human chain, and so managed this difficult operation without loss.

That afternoon the column negotiated the narrow paths clinging to the sides of the great precipices, then dipped down into the village of Barnas. Beynon, with the column, searched the area ahead to make sure that none of the tribesmen were around, then told his levies to start searching for food. He then selected his camping ground which was "a nice garden and orchard, with big shady mulberry trees and a stream flowing down the centre". During the afternoon Kelly arrived with the main body, and at 5 p.m. the rearguard fetched up. There was no news from the garrison at Chitral, but Kelly hoped to reach there in two days.³³

Just as Kelly had no news of Robertson, Robertson had no news of him. However, he remained confident that help would come sooner, or later, still held on, dealing with each day's problems as they arose. On the evening of the 16th of April the Pathans began to make a great noise with drums and pipes in the summer-house. Rab Nawaz Khan suggested that this might possibly be done to drown the noise of mining. Men were therefore put on to listen, and at mid night the sentry in the gun tower reported that he heard the noise of picks. The next morning, the sound of mining was distinctly audible, and within a few feet of the tower. It was decided to make a sortie at once to blow up the mine. Harley and a hundred men were told off for this duty. About 4 p.m. they came out of the fort, and, by dint of their dash and gallantry, succeeded in blowing up the mine from end to end. Of the hundred who went out twenty-two were hit-nine mortally.³⁴

32. Nevill, Captain H.L., *Campaign on the North-West Frontier*, 1912, pp. 194-195.

33. Younghusband and Younghusband, p. 167.

34. British Agency, Gilgit, Diary from March 1 to April 19, 1895, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, July 1895, Nos. 1103-1121; Captain C.V.F. Townshend to

Chitral is Relieved

The 18th of April, 1895, was a gala day for the garrison at Chitral. For, on that day, in the middle of the night, suddenly a welcome news came. Rooshun, one of the important Chitrali nobles, came and stood outside the fort, and called out at the top of his voice that he had an important information to convey. He shouted that Sher Afzul had fled, and that the relieving force was near at hand. The news thus received was confirmed the next morning, April 19th, when a reconnoitre showed no one of the besiegers in sight anywhere.³⁵ The following day Colonel Kelly arrived with his forces.³⁶ He was followed by General Gatacre, who in spite of the snow on the Lowari Pass, and the difficulties of the road, reached Chitral on May 15. Sir Robert Low himself arrived on the morning of the 16th.³⁷ This was an occasion for celebration, and General Low congratulated the garrison on sustaining the long siege, and Kelly and his men on reaching Chitral against such enormous odds.³⁸

Now came the time for the troops to be sent back to their respective places of duty. On May 18 General Low himself and his staff left for Dir. The following day Robertson and Colonel Durand, now Military Secretary to the Viceroy, started for India by way of Swat and Jandul. They took with them Amir-ul-Mulk, who could not be allowed to remain in Chitral with safety to Shuja-ul-Mulk, Sher Afzul, Yadgar Beg and a number of other Chitralis who had surrendered to General Low after the flight of Umra Khan. They were kept in custody at Dharamsala.³⁹

So ended a memorable siege. It had lasted altogether forty-six days, and there had been, in the Chitral Fort, thirty-

Lt-Col A. Durand, April 25, 1895, Elgin Papers, MSS EUR F 84/73 EXP 240; Thomson, H.C., pp. 76-79; Younghusband and Younghusband, pp. 125-129.

35. Thomson, H.C., p. 83.

36. Viceroy to Queen Empress, April 25, 1895, Elgin Papers, MSS 84/12 (1894).

37. Nevill, Captain H.L., *Campaign on the North-West Frontier*, 1912, p. 195.

38. Thomson, H.C., p. 238.

39. *Ibid.*, pp. 240-242.

nine men killed and sixty-two wounded. Apart from them there were a large number of those who laid down their lives in a bid to come to their rescue. The losses these latter suffered have been given in the preceding pages where we discussed the different actions they fought. All ranks were granted six-months' pay, which reward also fell to the heirs of those killed, in addition to the pensions to which they might be entitled.⁴⁰

It may be interesting to know as to what led to the ultimate victory of the British, and to Sher Afzul and Umra Khan's raising the siege of the Chitral Fort. One cause of the British success was their undoubted superiority in armaments and organisation. They possessed Artillery to the fire of which, as we have seen, the tribesmen were not accustomed, which they could not stand, and which completely demoralised them. The rapid and successful mobilisation of the Relief Force at Peshawar, the crushing defeat of the tribal force in Swat, on the Panjkora, and in the Jandul valley also played their role. Nor can one forget the hardihood and determination which Kelly and his small column displayed while advancing from Gilgit. The most creditable however was the stout resistance of the garrison placed perforce in an almost untenable position against overwhelming odds, which thoroughly damped the ardour of the besiegers and paved the way for the effective result obtained by the approach of the relief columns.⁴¹

Be that as it may, after the Chitral garrison was relieved there arose the question whether the British troops should be withdrawn from Chitral completely or they should be stationed there as a permanent part of the British frontier policy. Before however, we discuss the question at hand it may be interesting to quote the views of the Sahachar, a contemporary journal, on the question of the Chitral disturbances as whole, and the British attitude towards them. The journal in its issue dated April 3, 1895, attributed the above mentioned disturbances in Chitral and their consequences to the interference of the

40. Captain C.V.F. Townshend to Lt-Col A. Durand, April 25, 1895, Elgin Papers, MSS EUR F 84/73 EXP 240; Viceroy to SSI, No. 372, April 22, 1895, Elgin Papers, Reel No. 4, NAI: Thomson, H.C., p. 84; Younghusband and Younghusband, p. 131.

41. Younghusband and Younghusband, p. 95.

British officers in the internal affairs of that State. It made the following observation on the subject : "It is true that Lieutenant Gurdon, who was present at Chitral with a party of eight men at the time of the murder of Nizam-ul-Mulk by his brother Amir, did not oppose the latter in any way. But he would have done well to leave Chitral on its occupation by Amir". The journal goes on to say that it was highly commendable on the part of Amir and his followers, who were naturally of an excitable temper that they did not at first molest the British officer in Chitral; that this single fact shows that Amir-ul-Mulk really intended to be on friendly terms with the British government; that Dr. Robertson ought to have reciprocated that feeling; that instead of stationing Lieutenant Gurdon at Chitral, and reinforcing him with 300 men, he ought to have let the Chitralis to fight their own quarrel among themselves; that in that case the government of India would not have been brought to this critical position; that the crisis might have been averted even if Robertson had left Chitral when Umra Khan appeared on the scene with Sher Afzul to oppose the progress of Amir; and that Umra Khan had so long been on the most friendly terms with the British government, and he would not surely have done anything to prejudice its interests.⁴²

The matter, however, was not as simple as the Saha char considered. It is not at all unreasonable to believe that the withdrawal of the British officers, Gurdon and Robertson, from Chitral after the assassination of Nizam-ul-Mulk would have given Amir-ul-Mulk, Sher Afzul and Umra Khan a free hand to contest the throne of that State, and that one of them would have gained his objective. But how far the territories held by the British should have escaped the adverse effects of a large-scale disturbance in the neighbourhood, is a debatable question. Nor can one understand as to how it could be both legal and moral on the part of the government of India to give leave to Umra Khan of Jandul to make a bid for the throne of Chitral. For Chitral owed allegiance to Kashmir, and through it, to India. It was, therefore, the duty of the British government to protect Chitral from the interference

42. Report on Native Newspapers, Bengal, 1895, p. 289, NAI.

and inroads of foreign rulers like Umra Khan. The embroilment of the government of India in the crisis, under the circumstances, was unavoidable.

Retention or Renunciation

With the relief of the Chitral Fort, and the dispersal of the hostile forces, emerged, as we have seen above, the question of the retention of that State. Should the British remain in Chitral, or abandon it to the tribesmen themselves.⁴³ On May 8, 1895, the government of India decided to retain a garrison in Chitral, and, to ensure its safety, proposed to the Home government the construction of a road from Peshawar through Swat.⁴⁴ For, it was pointed out that the only communication with Chitral at the time was by way of Kashmir and the isolated position of Gilgit. Not only was this route circuitous and the roads bad, but Gilgit itself for many months in the year was also cut off by snow from both India and Chitral. The question of the retention of a garrison in Chitral, therefore, hinged on the proposal to construct a more direct road over the Malakand.⁴⁵ At the same time government of India pointed out that the annals of Chitral were nothing but anarchy, and that Afghan aggression had forced Aman-ul-Mulk to seek the protection of Kashmir. Great stress was laid upon the fact that the history of Chitral for the previous twenty years had shown conclusively that it could not stand alone.⁴⁶

The government of India's decision, however, did not meet with the approval of Lord Rosebery's cabinet and the Liberal government at home. Consequently, instructions were telegraphed to India, on June 13, 1895, to the effect that no military force or European agent was to be retained in Chitral; that Chitral was not to be fortified; and that the projected road was not to be constructed.⁴⁷

43. Younghusband, Sir Francis, *The Light of Experience*, 1927, p. 76 (Sir Francis Younghusband, shared the views of those who advocated the retention of Chitral).

44. Davies, C. Collin, *The Problem of the North-West Frontier 1890-1908*, 1932, p. 86.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 85.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 86.

47. SSI to Viceroy, No. 355, April 18, 1895, Elgin Papers, Reel No. 4, NAI; Davies, C. Collin, *The Problem of the North-West Frontier 1890-1908*, 1932, p. 85.

This policy of the government in London was influenced by the views of such military authorities as Sir Donald Stewart, Sir Neville Chamberlain, Sir John Adye, Sir Charles Gough, and Lord Chelmsford. All these dignitaries had served in India and Chitral.⁴⁸

It will be convenient here to examine the arguments for and against the retention of Chitral. The advocates of withdrawal considered the construction of the new road to be contrary to the spirit of the proclamation of March 1895. It not only constituted a deliberate breach of faith with the tribes, but, in their opinion, it was also likely to lead to the annexation of tribal territory, the very thing the British had pledged themselves not to do. Sir Henry Fowler, speaking in the House of Commons, condemned it on military and financial grounds also. Running for about 180 miles through hostile Pathan country over the Malakand and the Lowarai both the construction and protection of this road would entail enormous expenditure, and involve grave military responsibilities.⁴⁹ Other arguments in favour of withdrawal were : the gigantic natural geographical defences of the North-West frontier rendered the advance of an invading army practically impossible, and that having regard to these and other considerations, the British position was at that moment practically impregnable;⁵⁰ that the Amir of Afghanistan, by the Durand Agreement of 1893*, had bound himself not to interfere in Swat, Bajaur, or

48. Thomson, H.C., p. 305.

49. Davies C. Collin, *The Problem of the North-West-Frontier 1890-1908* 1932, p. 86.

50. H.H. Fowler to Lord Elgin, June 12, 1895, Elgin Papers, Reel No. 2, NAI.

* Prior to November 1893, the frontier of Afghanistan on the side of India was undemarcated, which fact had resulted in eruption of disputes between the two governments on these frontier matters. To put an end to such an unhappy state of affairs, the two countries, in the autumn of 1893, delineated the boundary from Chitral to Peshawar, and from there to the junction of Persia, Afghanistan and Baluchistan. The Amir renounced all claims to Chitral, Swat, Buner, Dir, Chalas, Kurram, and all other areas south-west of the line. A formal agreement to this effect was signed on November 13, 1893, by Sir

Chitral : consequently, all danger from Afghanistan had passed away;⁵¹ that the danger of Russian aggression from the region of the Pamirs had passed away as a result of the settlement of the Pamir boundary dispute on September 10, 1895;^{52*} that every mile the British advanced from their proper communications to meet Russia must increase their disadvantages; and that it would be preferable that Russia should have to come through miles of inhospitable mountain passes to attack the British rather than that they themselves should have to go into the middle of the mountains to meet Russia.⁵³

The principal advocates in England of the opposite, the "forward policy" were Lord Roberts and George Curzon.⁵⁴ These people contended that the breach of faith question was merely a party cry, for, with one exception, i.e; the Khan of Dir, the tribes had paid no heed to the proclamation and had resisted the British advance;⁵⁵ that the British had had their expedition and shown that they were not to be trifled with, and they had better remain and reap the fruits of it; that, if they left, the Russians, who were now established on the Pamirs, would walk in, and having left it themselves, the British would have poor ground for protesting; that with the Russians in Chitral the British would have all the frontier tribes round playing them off against them;⁵⁶ that the withdrawal would bring discredit on the British name and spread

Mortimer Durand for the Indian government, and by Amir Abd-ar Rehman for Kabul (Swinson Arthur, pp. 204-205). For details see Alder, G.J., pp. 330-332.

51. Davies, C. Collin, *The Problem of North-West Frontier, 1890-1908*, 1932, p. 87.

52. *Ibid.*

* It has not been found necessary for the purpose of this thesis to examine the question of this settlement in details. Those, however, who are interested in the matter may refer to GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, July 1895, Nos. 891-933.

53. H.H. Fowler to Lord Elgin, June 12, 1895, Elgin Papers, Reel No. 2, NAI.

54. Younghusband, Sir Francis, *The Light of Experience*, 1927, p. 76.

55. H.H. Fowler to Lord Elgin, June 12, 1895, Elgin Papers, Reel No. 2, NAI.

56. Younghusband, Sir Francis, *The Light of Experience*, 1927, p. 76.

demoralisation far and wide in the evacuated country;⁵⁷ and that the Pamir agreement had brought to Russia a great extension of military and political prestige, because she had been allowed to advance her frontiers to the Hindukush. If, at the same time, the British retired from Chitral, it would mean increased prestige for Russia.⁵⁸

A clear statement of the arguments for retention of Chitral can be seen in the following passage in E.F. Knight's book, "Where Three Empires Meet": But the valley of Chitral should be as completely under our control, as is that of Gilgit, for it commands some of the lowest and easiest passes across the Hindukush, and affords a ready road to India from Bokhara via Badakhshan. It is known that the Russian military authorities consider this a favourable route for the invasion of India; it avoids the great natural difficulties presented by the lofty and inhospitable Pamirs, and moreover there is an easy and much-used caravan road running direct from Chitral to Peshawar via Bajaur. The town of Chitral itself is situated at the junction of several valleys leading to the very passes which an invader would have to attempt, commanding them all. We should certainly maintain an agency here, as at Gilgit. This has long been meditated, and the late Mehtar himself repeatedly expressed a wish that a resident British officer should be appointed to his State. We should have the key of the Hindukush, and what is more, by commanding the lower Chitral valley, be enabled to outflank a Russian army advancing from Herat....."⁵⁹

And again: "To argue that the natural difficulties presented by these desert mountain regions, render any invasion on a formidable scale from this quarter impracticable, is not to the point. That small bodies of troops can cross the Hindukush the Russians have proved, and here a very small body indeed could prove the nucleus of far spreading mischief. If we neglected to keep under our influence the tribes south

57. George Hamilton to Lord Elgin, August 9, 1895, Elgin Papers, Reel No. 2, NAI.

58. Davies, C. Collin, *The Problem of the North-West Frontier 1890 to 1908*, 1932, p. 87.

59. Thomson, H.C, pp. 306-307.

of the great watershed, these would undoubtedly place themselves on the side of the apparently stronger power. Led by Russian officer, the tribesmen would fight well, and a diversion which we might find very serious would thus be brought about in the event of a war breaking out between the two countries."⁶⁰

The arguments put up by the protagonists of the retention of Chitral seem to be considerably weighty. They, however, could not make the Liberals change their minds and agree to the retention of the State.

Before, however, the withdrawal from Chitral could be effected, the Rosebery Ministry itself fell⁶¹ and was replaced by the Conservatives under Lord Salisbury.⁶² George Curzon became Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and took full advantage of his position to press upon his Chief, Lord Salisbury, the urgency of retaining Chitral.⁶³ Lord George Hamilton, the Secretary of State for India, supported the views of the government of India. And Chitral was retained.⁶⁴

There is much truth in the argument that the retention of Chitral was a burden on the Indian exchequer. It may also be true that it was almost impossible for a large Russian army to overcome the colossal natural barriers of the north-west frontier and try conclusions with the British in India. But it was not easy for the British to leave a place over the protection of which they had spent crores of rupees and sacrificed hundreds of valuable lives. The contention that withdrawal from Chitral would deliver a blow to British prestige and would spread demoralisation everywhere in the evacuated country, contains much weight. The exodus of the British from Chitral was bound to undo what they had done in that State to serve their own interests and those of the local people. There may be truth also in the argument that a small body of

60. *Ibid.*, pp. 307-308.

61. Gopal, S., *British Policy in India, 1858-1905*, 1965, p. 219.

62. Sir Arthur Godley to the Earl of Elgin, July 30, 1895, Elgin Papers, Reel No. 4, NAI; Younghusband, Sir Francis, *The Light of Experience*, 1927, p. 77.

63. Younghusband, Sir Francis, *The Light of Experience*, 1927, p. 77.

64. Lord George Hamilton to Lord Elgin, August 16, 1895, Elgin Papers, Reel No. 2, NAI; Younghusband, Sir Francis, *The Light of Experience*, 1927, p. 77.

Russians could cross the Hindukush and could, by setting the tribesmen there against the British, effect a diversion which the latter might find very grave in the event of a war breaking out between the two powers. It may be interesting at the end to point out, as it was afterwards discovered, that the Russians on the pamirs had orders to march into Chitral if the British marched out.⁶⁵

Be that as it may, Chitral was retained. The government of India established its control over the foreign relations, while its internal affairs were left entirely in the hands of Shuja-ul-Mulk.⁶⁶ He was to be given the assistance of a council of regency till he came of age.⁶⁷ The British garrison in the country was fixed at two Battalions of Indian Infantry, two mountain guns, and one Company of Sappers, stationed at Kila Drosh, with a detachment of half a Battalion in the Chitral Fort. The Malakand Pass was to be held by two Indian Infantry Battalions, a mountain Battery, and a Company of Sappers; the bridge over the Swat River was to be guarded by another Battalion of Indian Infantry, and the construction and improvement of the road from the Swat river to Kila Drosh was taken in hand and it was to be kept open by 250 Swat and 500 Dir levies.⁶⁸ And the total annual cost of retaining Chitral in this way was calculated to be rupees 2,500,000.⁶⁹

All the troops mentioned above were put under the control of a Political Officer stationed at Chitral. He was made subordinate to the Political Agent, Gilgit, and Shuja-ul-Mulk was granted his throne as a vassal of Kashmir.⁷⁰

In 1896, however, the subordination of the Chitral

65. Lord George Hamilton to Lord Elgin, August 16, 1895, Elgin Papers, Reel No. 2, NAI; Younghusband, Sir Francis, *The Light of Experience*, 1927, p. 77.

66. Davies, C. Collin, *The Problem of the North-West Frontier 1890-1908*, 1932, p. 88.

67. Thomson, H.C., p. 310.

68. Nevill, Captain H.L., *Campaign on the North-West Frontier*, 1912, p. 195.

69. Thomson, H.C., p. 310.

70. Alder, G.J., p. 298.

Political Officer to Gilgit was considered anomalous. It was ended and a separate Political Agency was established at Malakand, which consisted of Dir, Swat and Chitral. Chitral in this way ceased to be a part of the Gilgit Agency,⁷¹ and this in a way led to the reduction of the political importance of the latter.⁷²

71. Hashmetullah Khan, p. 887; Alder, G.J., p. 298.

72. Officiating Secretary to the government of India, Foreign Department, to Resident in Kashmir, No. 2254, F, August 19, 1899, GOI, Fgn, Front-A, September 1900, Nos. 26-45.

The Defence and Management of the Gilgit Agency

The history of the Gilgit Agency cannot be complete unless a mention is made of the troops that were maintained for preserving order within its borders, or for defending it against external aggressions.

(i) The Imperial Service Troops

In 1885 when the course of affairs on the Afghan frontier had brought about a near prospect of war between England and Russia, the Princely States in India came forward with enthusiasm and unanimity to place their resources at the disposal of the British government. The danger which then seemed imminent was averted, but the feelings which had been raised by it did not die away, and both in the States and elsewhere the idea began to gain ground that some scheme for utilising the military resources of the Chiefs ought to be worked out.

The matter was engaging attention when in the summer of 1887 the Nizam of Hyderabad made an offer of a considerable sum of money as a contribution towards the defence of the North-West frontier of India. And this example of his was followed by other Chiefs many of whom came forward.¹

The Viceroy and Governor-General, Lord Dufferin, gave earnest attention to these offers of the princes and announced their acceptance on November 17, 1888.² A scheme was

1. Brigadier-General Stuart Beatson, *A History of the Imperial Service Troops of Native States*, 1903, p. ii.

2. Col Algernon Durand, p. 116.

worked out under which those Chiefs who had specially good fighting materials in their armies were to raise a portion of those armies to such a pitch of general efficiency as would make them fit to go into action side by side with the British troops.

To help these Chiefs in setting on foot and maintaining the troops selected for service a few English officers were to be appointed as advisers and inspectors. These officers were to have their headquarters at some central point in British territory and were to visit the several States in turn.³

Among the princes who made the above offers of military aid to the British government was also the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir. In August 1888 he expressed a desire to keep 2,500 of his troops at Jammu in readiness for active service in the cause of the British empire and suggested that these troops should serve on the Gilgit border. This proposal was accepted in general terms, the details being left to be worked out thereafter.⁴

In the early part of 1889 this Kashmir contingent, known as the "Imperial Service Corps", was organised as follows: Two mountain Batteries of 100 rank and file each, exclusive of drivers; one Regiment of cavalry, 343, and three Regiments of Infantry, 634 each.

The first Infantry Regiment was composed of Dogras; the second mainly of Gurkhas, armed with short rifles and called the Rifle Corps; the third Chiefly of Muhammedans and called the Pioneers.⁵

In 1890 it was arranged that the Kashmir troops trained for Imperial needs and the defence of and Gilgit frontier should be increased and consist of two mountain Batteries and six Infantry Regiments, and that they should be stationed, one

3. Brigadier-General Stuart Beatson, *A History of the Imperial Service Troops of Native States*, 1903, pp. V-VII.

4. Note, dated February 24, 1889, by H.M. Durand on Kashmir Troops for Frontier Defence, GOI, Fgn, Sec-I, June 1890, Nos. 2-14; Brigadier-General Stuart Beatson, *A History of the Imperial Service Troops of Native States*, 1903, p. 83.

5. Note, dated February 24, 1889, by H.M. Durand, SGI, Fgn, on Kashmir Troops for Front Defence. GOI, Fgn, Sec-I, June 1980, Nos. 2-14.

Battery and three Regiments at Jammu for Imperial needs and one Battery and three Regiments at Gilgit for frontier defence, and should relieve each other every second year, service at Gilgit being very unpopular. In addition to these was the cavalry, who remained always at Jammu for Imperial needs.⁶

To avoid the simultaneous transfer to Gilgit of a large body of troops strange to the frontier, and to prevent the suffering which it was feared would be occasioned to the villagers by the movement of a considerable force at one time along the Gilgit-Jammu road, the reliefs were, after the year 1890, to be so arranged as to change as early as possible half the garrison alternately every summer.*

And if the Jammu force was called upon to serve outside the limits of the State about the time when the relief season was approaching, the Gilgit reliefs were to be withheld for a time.⁷

Training and Supervision of the Imperial Service Troops at Jammu

The Imperial Service Troops at Jammu were inspected by two British officers who were detached biennially from the Gilgit command. But this practice did not prove satisfactory.⁸

Jammu was the headquarters of the Kashmir Army, with its Commander-in-Chief and many senior staff officers located there, while the British officers of the staff drawn from Gilgit were mostly junior ones, whose advice on matters of drill,

6. SGI, Fgn, to Lt-Col R. Parry Nisbet, No. 16961 (Confdl), May 21, 1890, GOI, Fgn, Sec-I, June 1890, Nos. 2-14; Note, dated February 24, 1889, by H.M. Durand, SGI, Fgn, on Kashmir Troops for Front Defence, GOI, Fgn, Sec-I, June 1890, Nos. 2-14.

* It is said that the coolies who were every year taken from their homes to carry loads along the Kashmir-Gilgit Road, did not always return. Many perished of cold, fatigue and starvation and a journey to Gilgit was rather looked upon by the unfortunate men of Kashmir as certain death. GOI, Fgn, and Pol (Sec), No. 206-X of 1935. Nos. 1-31.

7. SGI, Fgn, to Lt-Col R. Parry Nisbet, Nos. 16961 (Confdl), May 21, 1890, GOI, Fgn, Sec-I, June 1890, Nos. 2-14.

8. Colonel H. Melliss to SGI, Fgn, No. 1302, September 19, 1894, GOI, Fgn, Sec-I, February 1895, Nos. 43-76.

discipline, and so forth, was not calculated to carry much weight at Jammu. Moreover, in detailing officers for service at Jammu, the British Agent at Gilgit, isolated as he was from India during the Winter months, was not likely to part with those found best and most trustworthy.⁹

Though the practice of detailing two officers biennially from Gilgit for service at Jammu was still continued, in 1894, a senior officer, specially selected from the British Indian army, and of not less than fifteen years' service, was appointed as general supervisor to train and supervise the Imperial Service Troops located at Jammu. His headquarters were fixed at Sialkot. This appointment was tenable for five years, was to be treated as one on the staff of the Inspector-General Imperial Service Troops,* and the incumbent was designated Chief Inspecting Officer, Kashmir Imperial Service Troops, Jammu. He was entirely under the orders of the Inspector-General Imperial Service Troops, and was in no way to form part of the staff of the British Agent at Gilgit.¹⁰

In time of peace the Kashmir Imperial Service Troops in the Gilgit command were under the orders of the Kashmiri General Officer Commanding. All questions regarding movements, reliefs and such like matters affecting these troops were settled by the Kashmiri General in consultation with the British Agent. The British Agent had his "Military Assistant" chosen from one of the British military officers on Special Duty in the Gilgit Agency. He was employed to conduct the British Agent's correspondence with the Officer Commanding the native Infantry Regiment at Gilgit, with the Kashmiri General Commanding the Kashmiri troops, and with the Darbar or the Resident in Kashmir in military matters, and he did any other related work which the British Agent chose to give him. The Military Assistant was in effect the British

9. Col H. Melliss to SGI, Fgn, No. 1302, September 19, 1894, GOI, Fgn. Sec-I, February 1895, Nos. 43-76.

* The Inspector-General, Imperial Service Troops, was the supreme authority in relation to the Imperial Service Troops organised by all the different Princely States.

10. Assistant SGI, Fgn, to Inspector-General Imperial Service Troops, No. 4297-I, December 15, 1894, GOI, Fgn, Sec-I, February 1895. Nos. 43-76.

Agent's Military Secretary, though he was not given that title.¹¹

Another of the officers on special military duty in the Agency was appointed to be Inspecting Officer of that part of the Kashmir Imperial Service Troops which happened to be at Gilgit. He was, in regard to questions of organisations, drill and equipment, under the orders of the Inspector-General, Imperial Service Troops. Reports, requisitions, etc; required of him were submitted through the British Agent and the Resident in Kashmir to the Inspector-General.¹²

On the commencement of active military operations, the whole of the troops in the Agency, including the Kashmir Imperial Service Troops and the British Agent's escort drawn from British Indian troops, were placed under the command of a combatant officer appointed to be the Officer Commanding the troops; and all the military officers on special military duty in the Agency, with the exception of the British Agent's Military Assistant, came under his command also. The British Agent communicated all his wishes and intentions to this combatant officer upon whom the entire responsibility for carrying out the operations rested.¹³

(ii) The Agency Staff

At the time of the re-establishment of the Agency its staff was fixed at four English officers.¹⁴ But in 1891 the government of India reinforced, as has been mentioned before, the British Agent with 200 Gurkhas and 14 English officers.¹⁵ The deputation of these officers was a temporary one and their emoluments were to be met from the British revenues. But in 1892 their appointment in Gilgit was made permanent as a part of the Agency Staff there and two political and four military officers

11. SGI, Fgn, to RK, No. 335 F, February 2, 1895, GOI, Fgn, Front-A. March 1895, Nos. 8-13.

12. *Ibid.*

13. *Ibid.*

14. Government of India to SSI, No. 192, October 19, 1892, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, December 1892, Nos. 430-441.

15. Surpa, Chapter V.

were added to the number of the Agency Staff.¹⁶ This was done because :

(1) Between 1889 and 1891 the situation on the Gilgit frontier had greatly changed and the necessity for placing the Agency in a condition of thorough efficiency was no longer open to question. The Russians had invaded the Pamirs, and had cleared away the Chinese and the Afghans. They could, any summer, advance a force into the Passes of the Hindukush.¹⁷

(2) The Thums of Hunza and Nagar had adopted an inimical posture towards the Gilgit authorities, and it was necessary to strengthen the British Agent's hands against a possible aggression upon the Agency territory from this quarter.¹⁸

(3) There was an ever-present danger of a trouble arising in Chitral on the death of a Mehtar owing to a struggle ensuing amongst the different claimants to Mehtarship on account of the absence of the law of primogeniture in that country. Such a struggle was bound to disturb the peace of the Agency.¹⁹

(4) The Hunza-Nagar Campaign had proved that the number of Infantry officers in the Agency was insufficient. The Maharaja's troops at Gilgit were composed of men who could be turned into excellent soldiers, but their officers were bad as a rule, and the Regiments could be valueness without British officers. The territory of the Agency was extremely difficult, men required the best of leading, the extent of the country to be held was very great, for in whatever direction the Agency authorities had trouble, they had to watch other portions, perhaps 100 miles from the scene of action, with troops under British officers; and in a force which was practically without permanent departmental arrangements, there was endless extra work which devolved on British

16. Government of India to SSI, No. 192, October 19, 1892, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, December 1892, Nos. 430-441.

17. *Ibid.*

18. *Supra*, Chapter V.

19. Government of India to SSI, No. 192, October 19, 1892, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, December 1892, Nos. 430-441.

officers, so that there was a constant call for their services. During the fighting in Nagar in December 1891, the scarcity of officers had made itself very much felt, and the Officer Commanding was obliged, owing to a few casualties amongst officers, to utilise the services of one or two civilians who happened to be on the spot—a most unsatisfactory and dangerous state of things.

(5) The work of supply was an endless difficulty in the Agency, which could be materially facilitated by having an officer of the Commissariat department permanently attached to the force.

(6) Lastly, there was a great deal to be done in the Agency in making bridges and improving roads. Until communications were better, the difficulty and expense of collecting supplies from a country naturally poor were very great. The Agency also had to build shelter for troops, improve forts and construct irrigation channels.²⁰

The new staff of the Agency consisted of the British Agent, one Staff officer-cum-Military Assistant to the British Agent, two Engineer officers, two Artillery officers, twelve infantry officers and one Commissariat officer.

British Agent :—The British Agent had the military control on the frontier as well as the chief political power.

Staff Officer-cum-Military Assistant to the British Agent :—This officer was the official medium through whom all communications on military matters between the British Agent and the Kashmir authorities at Gilgit were carried on. He was also to act, when necessary, as Staff Officer to the Officer Commanding the troops.

Engineer Officers :—Under the orders of the British Agent, and with the concurrence of the Kashmir military authorities at Gilgit, these officers were to direct and superintend the military works carried on at any time by the State troops, and Sappers and Miners, in the Gilgit command.

Artillery Officers :—These officers were to superintend the instruction of the Kashmir Mountain Battery and Garrison Battery in the Gilgit command, and assist the officers in

20. British Agent, Gilgit, to RK, No. 823/185, May 6/7, 1892, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, December 1892, Nos. 430-441.

command of these Batteries with their advice when necessary. In case of active service, these officers were, at the discretion of the British Agent, to be attached to the Battery on service for duty.

Infantry Officers :—Two of the twelve officers were to be posted at Jammu, and act as Inspecting officers of the Kashmir Imperial Service Troops. They were to be relieved biennially by two officers from Gilgit. Owing to the difficulty of communication with Gilgit, and to the fact that the general supervision of the Kashmir Imperial Service Troops rested with the Chief Inspecting officer, Imperial Service Troops, after 1894, these officers reported direct to the latter. The senior of the two officers also was to report monthly to Gilgit as to the condition of the troops next on the roster for Gilgit, in order to enable the British Agent to bring any point which might strike him as necessary to the notice of the Chief Inspecting Officer.

In order to avoid any unnecessary interference with Kashmir officers commanding the Kashmir Infantry Regiments in the Gilgit command, and to guard against their authority being lessened, the remaining ten British officers were not to be permanently attached to the Regiments. The British Agent was to detail a portion, probably two per Regiment, to assist the Officer Commanding in the instruction of his Regiment. In case of active service these officers and any others whose services could be spared were to be attached to the Regiments.

The remaining four officers were in ordinary times to be employed on any special work, such as explorations, instructions of local levies, that it was necessary to carry out.

Commissariat Officer :—This officer was, under the orders of the British Agent, and with the concurrence of the Kashmir authorities, to supervise the storage and issue of the supplies for the Gilgit force.²¹

The defence of the Gilgit Agency was thus strengthened by increasing the number of the British officers attached to its staff. And in 1893 a further step was taken in this direction by issuing the Kashmir Imperial Service Troops with Martini Henry Rifles and by making them return to the British arsenals.

21. GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, February 1893, Nos. 99-114.

the comparatively inferior Snider Rifles and Carbines which they had hitherto been using.²²

(iii) Reduction and Concentration of Troops in the Agency.

In 1896 the force in the Agency consisted of :—

- (a) Two hundred rifles, from Kashmir Imperial Service Troops, forming the personal escort of the British Agent;
- (b) a detachment (about 40) of Bengal Sappers and Miners;
- (c) Three Regiments (600 rifles each) of Kashmir Imperial Service Infantry;
- (d) One Kashmir Imperial Service Mountain Battery;
- (e) Two Companies of Kashmir Sappers and Miners.

The cost to the Darbar of maintaining the above force of their troops in the Agency was stupendous one and the need for affording some relief was urgent. At this time the Kashmir troops in the Agency were distributed in 19 posts, 12 of which were merely connecting links on the lines of communication. This splitting up of the troops into small detachments had made the military posts weak, and discipline among the troops had become lax.

The government of India were of the view that military expenditure in Gilgit could be reduced, and military posts there could be made strong, by concentrating military forces in the Agency, and by reorganizing the Kashmir Imperial Service Troops.²³ Under the suggestion of the government of India,²⁴ and with the sanction of the Secretary of State for India,²⁵ the Kashmir Darbar, therefore, in 1897, implemented a scheme of concentration of troops at Gilgit, the replacement

22. RK to Vice-President of Kashmir State Council, No. 5958, December 8, 1893, JK 21 of 1893.

23. Government of India to Lord George F. Hamilton, No. 35, Sec, Front, February 19, 1896, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, April 1896, Nos. 169-221.

24. GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, August 1896, Nos. 154-160.

25. SSI to Governor-General of India-in-Council, No. 10, Sec, March 27, 1896, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, June 1896, Nos. 38-54.

of scattered detachments in Yasin, Hunza and Nagar by local levies* and the reorganisation of six Battalions of Imperial Service Infantry into four Battalions, each 702 strong.²⁶ This scheme provided amply for the defence of the Agency, at a net saving to Kashmir revenues of Rs. 84,000 a year, and to British revenues of Rs. 41,000 on account of supply and transport, apart from further savings, both to the British government and the State of Kashmir, when supplies to the distant posts were no longer required.²⁷ The execution of this scheme brought the number of the Agency troops down to :—

The British Agent's escort of 200 rifles

One Mountain Battery of four guns

Two Battalions Imperial Service Infantry, each 702 strong.

Two companies Kashmir Sappers and Miners or 1,600 rifles.²⁸

Military expenditure at Gilgit was further reduced in 1900. In this year, the number of officers attached to the Agency and under the orders of the Political Agent was 14. But the cost of this establishment was, in the opinion of the government of India, higher than in the then circumstances was necessary.²⁹ For, the separation of Chitral from the political charge of the Gilgit Agency in 1896 had, as has been said before, reduced the political importance of Gilgit.

The Political Agent's escort of regular troops was, therefore, withdrawn, and their duties devolved on the Kashmir Imperial Service Troops in the Agency. Besides, 7 out of the 14 officers of the Agency Staff were withdrawn.³⁰ These changes in the Agency, however, did not imply any alteration of policy towards the frontier people, either on the part of the government of India or of the Maharaja of Kashmir.³¹

* See the following pages.

26. GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, August 1896, Nos. 154-160.

27. GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, June 1896, Nos. 38-54.

28. Officiating RK to Vice-President of J and K State Council, No. 2234, May 28, 1896, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, June 1896, Nos. 38-54.

29. Officiating SGI, Fgn, to RK, No. 2554, August 19, 1899, GOI, Fgn, Front-A, September 1900, Nos. 26-45.

30. SGI, Fgn, to RK, No. 880-F, March 28, 1900, GOI, Fgn, Front-A, September 1900, Nos. 26-45.

31. PAG to RK, No. 914, April 15, 1901, GOI, Front-A, September 1900, Nos. 26-45.

In December 1906 the Agency troops were further reduced from their then existing strength of 12 Companies of Imperial Service Infantry, one Battery and one company of Sappers and Miners to eight companies of Infantry and one Battery.³² And the headquarters of the reduced Agency troops were fixed at Gilgit with three companies. Of the remaining five companies, two each were posted at Boonji and Chilas and one of Gupis. To make up for this reduction an increase in the tribal levies came under consideration. The subject continued to be examined till it was decided that the levies should be replaced by a corps of Scouts as detailed in the following pages.

The chief reason for the progressive reduction of the troops was that by 1906, the various peoples on the Gilgit frontier were so very much more settled that they formerly were. The effect of the successful military operations of the British in Hunza-Nagar in 1891, Chilas in 1893, and Chitral in 1895, and of the subsequent political treatment of these peoples had been to practically eradicate any desire of the people to set themselves up in opposition to the British. Both the Chiefs and peoples of the frontier were content with the mild control the British exercised over them. It was not imagined that any trouble would arise which the Political Agent with a couple of companies and two guns and the tribal levies could not successfully cope with. The people of the Agency had not the fanaticism of the Pathan tribes. Any combination of all the peoples seemed highly improbable and most that the military force was likely to be required for, was the settlement of some dispute about a succession or a wazirship or some other internal trouble. Further-more, the means of communication had by this time decidedly improved. There were two serviceable routes—by Astore and by Chilas—into the Agency, and in an emergency it was possible to move a force by small detachments across the Passes to Gilgit even in winter. Lastly,

32. Sir Francis Younghusband to Louis Dane, No. 5-6, December 11, 1906, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, September 1907, Nos. 170-185; SGI, Fgn, to Major Sir Francis Younghusband, No. 56-I, February 1, 1907, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, September 1907, Nos. 170-185.

though Chitral was originally dependent for support on Gilgit it was now supported from Malakand.³³

(iv) Establishment of Local Levies in the Agency for its Defence

In 1892 the government of India empowered the Political Agent, Gilgit, to raise local levies in the Agency for its defence. The strength of the levies in the first instance was limited to a maximum of three hundred men of all ranks.³⁴

The scheme was introduced by the Political Agent in November 1892, and picked men were enlisted in equal proportions from Hunza, Nagar and Punial. They received a certain amount of training in musketry, and were to be directed by the Political Agent, assisted by British officers who could draw instructors from the detachments of British troops and the Imperial Service Troops stationed at Gilgit.³⁵

During the winter the men were to be trained to work on glaciers and on heavy snow. A sum of Rs. 2,000 was estimated to cover this charge as well as necessary expenditure for the purchase of ice-axes, ropes and other miscellaneous equipment.

The men were to receive pay at the rate of Rs. 6 per mensem when called out for training on service and were to have a retaining fee of not more than Rs. 3 per month during the remainder of the year, while the Political Agent was authorised to sanction slightly increased rates of pay to the superior men who were to be employed with the levies in the capacity of officers or non-commissioned officers. The pay of the levies on the above scale, including higher rates for leading men was estimated at Rs. 13,000 per annum.

Free rations were granted to the men during training. They were not put into regular uniforms but "Kamarbands"

33. Sir Francis Younghusband to Sir Louis Dane, No. 5-6, December 11, 1906, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, September 1907, Nos. 170-185.

34. W.F. Prideaux to Amar Singh, No. 4562, September 21, 1892, JK 71 of 1892; AAR, Fgn, 1892-93.

35. *Ibid.*, also Major Dew to Francis Younghusband, No. 1616-1, June 1, 1909, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, December 1909, Nos. 1-2.

and turbans of some distinguishing colours were issued to them.³⁶

They were given their fire-arms, but did not keep their rifles, which were only handed over to them when they were called out for training.³⁷

The levies were looked upon as a force of auxiliaries which could be of great use in holding the Passes in the event of trouble arising across the frontier. These men with others who had not been trained, but who readily obeyed the orders of their Chiefs, served with Colonel G.J. Kelly's force during the advance of the latter to Chitral in 1895 and afforded material help.³⁸

The entire cost entailed by the above scheme was borne by the Kashmir State.³⁹ In 1897, consequent upon the implementation of the scheme of concentration of regular troops at Chitral and Gilgit, and the replacements of scattered detachments in Yasin, Hunza and Nagar by levies, the expenditure on account of the levies increased to Rs. 36,000 per annum.⁴⁰

The British government, in August 1898, sanctioned a levy scheme for the Agency, which provided for a force of 87 leaders, Havildars, etc; and 570 men (inclusive of the levies which were then already in existence) at an annual cost of Rs. 38,628.⁴¹

The British government, from time to time, effected small

36. W.F. Prideaux to Amar Singh Vice-President of Kashmir State Council, No. 4652, September 21, 1892, JK 71 of 1892; AAR, Fgn, 1892-93.

37. Government of India to Lord George F. Hamilton, No. 35, Sec-Front, February 19, 1896, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, April 1896, Nos. 169-221.

38. Major Dew to Francis Younghusband, No. 1616-1; June 1, 1909, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, December 1909, Nos. 1-2.

39. W.F. Prideaux to Amar Singh Vice-President of Kashmir State Council, No. 4562, September 21, 1892, JK 71 of 1892; AAR, Fgn, 1892-1893.

40. Offg RK to Vice-President of Kashmir State Council, No. 2234, May 28, 1896, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, August 1896, Nos. 154-160; Military Secretary to Kashmir government to Commander-in-Chief, No. 1347, August 29, 1896, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, November 1896, Nos. 163-168.

41. GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, May 1913, Nos. 95-102.

increases in the strength of the force—which in 1913 consisted of 278 fighting levies who received a rough training in the use of firearms and performed guard duties; 348 civil levies who were unarmed and performed police duties, and 58 bodyguard levies. The total cost was Rs. 42,481 per annum.⁴²

(v) Creation of a Corps of Scouts in 1913

In 1913 the government of India, with the approval of the Secretary of State for India, created a new and permanent body of troops, a corps of Scouts 656 strong, in Gilgit for its defence. This corps was to take the place of the local levies in the Agency the number of which was now reduced to only 146 civil levies. The cost of the corps was to be contributed in moieties by the Imperial government and the Kashmir State.⁴³

This corps was to consist of 8 companies of 80 men each, being furnished by almost all the important territorial units of the Agency. Each company had two native officers, viz., a subedar and a Jamadar, and was divided into 4 sections of twenty men each under a Havildar, and there were also four Naiks to each company.⁴⁴ The Chiefs of the districts, States and communities concerned were associated with their respective units, and were responsible for producing suitable men for enlistment in the corps, for which they were given certain allowances, but no man was taken unless he was first approved by the Commandant of Scouts. Each company did one month's training in the year. The training of some of these companies was carried out at Gilgit, and those of the others at Gupis. The corps was paid by the State and was therefore a State corps in all respects except as regards administrative control, in which respect it remained entirely under the Political Agent.

42. *Ibid.*

43. PAG to RK, No. 402-T, July 29, 1912, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, May 1913, Nos. 95-102; SSI to Governor-General of India-in-Council, No. 67, July 11, 1913, GOI, Fgn, Sec, Front, September 1913, Nos. 23-28; Government of India, Fgn, to Marquess of Crewe, No. 44, Sec-Front, May 8, 1913, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, May 1913, Nos. 95-102.

44. PAG to RK, No. 402-T, July 29, 1912, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, May 1913, Nos. 95-102; SSI to Governor-General of India-in-Council, No. 67, July 11, 1913, GOI, Fgn, Sec, Front, September 1913, Nos. 23-28.

The Military Assistant to the Political Agent, Gilgit, was made the commandant of the Scouts. His duties were to assist in the training of the Scouts, and to exercise a general supervision over the corps. He was to be qualified in either the Chitrali or Shina dialects.

The Military Assistant was assisted in his duties by an Assistant Commandant. This officer, like the Commandant, was a British officer and was to have no connection with the Kashmir Imperial Service Troops. Both the Commandant and the Assistant Commandant were also Political Officers.

All important matters in connection with the corps, and particularly those touching enlistment and appointments to superior posts, were referred for orders to the Political Agent by the Commandant of the corps and his assistant. The organisation of the corps being essentially of a political character, it was important that the supreme control should vest in the Political Agent, and that he should be freely consulted and his orders taken in all matters affecting the general welfare and organisation of the corps.

The Corps was armed with Lee Enfield rifles. These arms were not served out to the men to keep in their possession, but always remained stored, in charge of the Imperial Service Troops in the forts at Gilgit and Gupis, and were only issued for the annual training or otherwise on occasion as required.

The scouts were given a monthly retaining fee. The amount of this was one rupee a month in the case of a Scout, and Rs. 5 in the case of a subedar. This fee was payable for eleven months in the year only, i.e; for these months when the men were not undergoing their annual training. For the latter month a special scale of pay was laid down which included the retaining fee. The retaining fee served to impress on the men the very important fact that they were the servants of the government of India all the year round, and not merely for the period during which they were actually undergoing training.

The members of the corps were also given extra duty pay. The rate was payable to both officers and men on all occasions when they were called out on miscellaneous duties, such as furnishing escorts to British officers travelling through the Agency, guards for prisoners, outpost duty in Nalas, etc; etc; in

fact any specific duty unconnected with their annual training that might be required of them.⁴⁵

The causes which led the government of India to raise the Corps, which now was a permanent body of troops, were as follows :

First, such a corps was required to provide employment both of a useful and congenial nature for a very large number of men who were most anxious for employment of this nature, as well as for many Gushpurs,* the majority of whom were without occupation of any kind, and for whom it was becoming more and more important that something should be done.⁴⁶

Secondly, the existing levies had not been a successful institution. As a military asset they had practically been worthless, the men not being given a regular training and discipline, nor being supplied with upto date and serviceable arms. Their existence was a large recurring expense of questionable benefit.⁴⁷

Thirdly, at this time there was the probability of the occupation of Kashgaria by the Russians. This increased the need for an efficient local force to watch and control the country lying to the south of the Hindukush. The Gilgit levies were stated to be reliable for defence. But ill-armed and untrained as they were, they could be nothing but "in peace a charge, in war a weak defence."⁴⁸

Fourthly, the civil levies were greatly in excess of actual requirements.

Fifthly, the existing Garrison of the Kashmir Imperial Service Troops was barely sufficient for the duties required of it, and in the event of disturbances arising anywhere could

45. PAG to RK, No. 402-T, July 29, 1912, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, May 1913, Nos. 95-102.

* Gushpurs were members of aristocratic classes.

46. PAG to RK, No. 402-T, July 29, 1912, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, May 1913, Nos. 95-192.

47. RK to SGI, Fgn, No. 230, September 26, 1912, GOI, Fgn. Sec-F, May 1913, Nos. 95-102; PAG to RK, No. 402-T, July 29, 1912, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, May 1913, Nos. 95-102.

48. PAG to RK, No. 402-T, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, May, 1913, Nos. 95-102.

with difficulty take the offensive except in very limited numbers and then only probably along the main lines of communication. The tribes across the frontier, on the other hand, notably in Darel and Tangir, were then yearly becoming better armed, and the existing corps of fighting levies was not capable of taking the field against them. It was very important, therefore, that it should be both improved and augmented. Regular troops like the Kashmir Imperial Service Troops were, owing to the nature of the frontier country, generally unsuited for rapid movements in the hills and work of this sort could best be done by local men organised and trained like the corps in question. This corps, though not highly trained, was, with their modern rifles and such training as was given them, more than a match for any tribal combination that could be brought against them, and that is all that was required.

Sixthly, though much had been done in the way of reduction of the Gilgit Agency Garrison, still the burden of the Gilgit expenditure, both to the Kashmir State and the government of India, was so great that "every likely expedient should be tried which is calculated to save expense," also "that neither reduction nor concentration can be carried out to any large extent without the employment of levies to hold the outposts." Hence the need for the employment of local men of greater efficiency and training for the defence of the Agency.

Seventhly and lastly, it was necessary to put a stop to the idea that the garrison of Imperial Service Troops in the Agency was quartered for the purpose of overawing the frontier tribes and thus fostering in their minds the impression that they were distrusted by the British government. It was the best means of increasing their loyalty to give them leave to have a share in the defence of their country and thus dispelling the idea referred to above.⁴⁹

In 1926 the following further changes were effected with regard to the annual training and service conditions of the Scouts at an annual cost of Rs. 17,098, which was met by the Kashmir Darbar :

49. PAG to RK, No. 402-T, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, May 1913, Nos. 95-102.

(a) Increase in the period of the Scouts' Training

When the Corps was first established, four companies were given training at a time, but it was found that it was difficult to give so many men proper supervision in so short a time, and it was arranged to train three companies in October-November, two companies in November-December and three companies in February-March.⁵⁰

But one month in the year did not give enough time to enable the British to get full value out of the Scouts. For eleven months they had worked in their fields and a portion of the training period, had, therefore to be given up to the revision of elementary training. Thereafter, Musketry Range practices were fired and, by the time that these were completed, the greater part of the training month had passed, and little time remained for Field training. By increasing the period to two months, an increase of efficiency was obtained, for it allowed more time to be devoted to both elementary and field training.

From the political point of view, the change was desirable, as it not only brought the men into closer touch with the British, but increased the amount of supplies or money, which they were able to take back to their homes, and thus strengthened indirectly the British hold over the families.

(b) Extra Training for Officers and Non-commissioned Officers

The system of one month's training instituted in 1913 had resulted in a low standard of training being possessed by the officers and non-commissioned officers. This had caused hampers to the Commandant of Scouts. Under the system, it took the officers and non-commissioned officers time to pick up the threads of their work at the beginning of each training and so valuable time was lost. The efficiency of a unit must always depend on the efficiency of its officers and non-commissioned officers. Moreover, the rate at which

50. Major G. Loch to the First Assistant to RK, No. 540, March 6, 1926, GOI, Fgn and Pol, No. 452-X of 1926, Nos. 1-8; Letter to the RK, No. 452-X, July 20, 1926, GOI, Fgn and Pol, No. 452-X of 1926, Nos. 1-8; From RK, No. 459-C, December 18, 1926, (Ccnfd!), GOI, Fgn and Pol, No. 452-X of 1926, Nos. 1-8.

training can progress, a most important point in this case, must similarly depend on the standard of knowledge (and power to impart such knowledge) possessed by the commissioned and non-commissioned ranks. Under the change, thus, a few officers and non-commissioned officers were selected from each group of the companies of Scouts for a week's course of instruction just before the companies started their annual training.

The measure enabled the commandant to give undivided attention to the officers and non-commissioned officers and have them ready to take up the training of the Scouts directly they reached the place of training.⁵¹

(c) Improvements in the Service Condition of the Scouts

Since the inception of the Corps of Scouts its members were required to provide themselves with their own footgear and received no allowance for doing so. This meant an expenditure from their pay. To remove this grievance, each man was given an allowance of Rs. 2/8/- a year.

The Scouts at this time received a followers ration. It was not thought necessary to issue a fighting man's ration to them, and in any case certain items of the Indian fighting man's ration were unsuitable to local requirements of diet. In view however, of the work that the Scouts did and of the climate, it was desirable that tea and gur should be added to the followers ration. The Scouts were continuously asking that this concession might be given to them, and it was reasonable to do so, as the country was a tea drinking one. The Agency Surgeon supported this proposal also from the medical point of view. This concession was, therefore allowed the Scouts.

The total annual cost of increasing the period of the Scouts' training from one month to two months, of giving extra training to officers and non-commissioned officers, and of effecting improvements in the service condition of Scouts came to Rs. 17,098 which was borne by the Kashmir State.*

51. *Ibid.*

* It was the practice for the Kashmir Darbar to meet the charges for the pay, clothing and rations of the Scouts and for the Government of India to bear the cost of the arms, ammunition and the equipment of the Corps.

(GOI, Fgn and Pol, File No. 452-X of 1927, Nos. 1-8).

The introduction of the above reforms had become necessary because at this time the Soviet government had adopted a policy in Central Asia of conciliation towards the poor and ignorant classes to the detriment of the ruling classes. For this reason it was desirable that the British should do what they could in the interests of the Mirs and Governors of the Agency and, therefore, of themselves, to ensure content among the lower classes and to forge bonds to tie them to them. From the very nature of the English system of administering the country through the Mirs and Governors, the Political Agent and other British officers came comparatively little into touch with the inhabitants ; indeed, the area of the Agency and the difficulties of getting about in any case made it impossible to do so to any extent. The only really close point of contact was afforded by the Gilgit Corps of Scouts, who were recruited from Hunza, Nagar, Punial, Kuh-Ghizar, Gilgit etc. They comprised a few picked men from every village of the Agency. They knew the English and their ways, received pay which found its way straight into their hands, and were on the side of the British. They went back to their homes after training with supplies and presents for their families and that gave the British a hold over the common folk, which they could not otherwise achieve.⁵²

The Scouts become responsible for the Defence and Internal Security of the Agency

In 1935 the Maharaja of Kashmir leased, as will be seen in the following chapter, the Gilgit Agency to the British for a period of sixty years, and withdrew the Imperial Service Troops from the leased area during the summer of that year.⁵³ From the time of the re-establishment of the Agency in 1889 up to its lease in 1935 its defence and internal security had been entrusted to the Kashmir Imperial Service Troops.⁵⁴ With the abolition of the Military Levies in 1913, as we have already seen, a new force was organised under the name of the Gilgit Scouts who were enlisted for both external and internal defence, and

52. *Ibid.*

53. Memo from RK, No. F-1-C/31, June 13, 1933, GOI, Fgn and Pol, File No. 114-X (Sec) of 1935, Serial Nos. 1-35.

54. GOI, Fgn and Pol (Sec), No. 339-X of 1935, Nos. 1-31.

were liable for duty all the year round. Previous to 1935, these men received two months' annual training and for the remaining ten months resided at their homes being liable to be called up whenever required. On the withdrawal of the Kashmir Imperial Service Troops during the summer of 1935, however, the Gilgit Scouts became entirely responsible for the defence and internal security of the Agency. This necessitated a reorganisation of the corps which was carried out by substituting full for short time service for twenty-five per cent of the rank and file, and continuing the remainder on short time service as a reserve.⁵⁵ The details of this, however, lie beyond the gamut of our discussion.

(vi) Measures for the Improvement of Agriculture, Spread of Education and Conservation of Forests in the Agency

The political and military needs of the British on the Gilgit Frontier led them, besides maintaining a garrison of Kashmir Imperial Service Troops and local levies there, to take measures for the improvement of agriculture, spread of education and conservation of forests.

(a) Improvement of Agriculture

Local produce in the Gilgit Agency was not adequate enough to meet the grain requirements of the Gilgit garrison. It was, therefore, supplied from Kashmir, which caused great strain. To relieve it, a Corps of Sappers and Miners was deputed, in 1889, to Gilgit to make water channels, and bring land under cultivation. There was a 'good' piece of land lying uncultivated between Safed Parri and Chakar Kot in the Gilgit district. To irrigate it the corps started the construction of a Kuhl (water channel). They worked on it for about two years, during which period they made the channel about five miles in length. During 1891, owing to the disturbances of Hunza and Nagar, the Sappers were recalled, as their services were more essentially required in the said expedition. After this no steps were taken for the completion of the water channel. Work on it was,

55. *Ibid.*, also *The Weekly Ranbir*, July 31, 1935, Central Library, Jammu University.

however, resumed in the beginning of 1913 and the channel was completed before the year was out.⁵⁶

In 1898 an advance of rupees 1,200 was made by the Political Agent, Gilgit, to certain individuals in the Agency for the construction of a "very necessary*" water channel. And Rs. 1545/9/ were spent, in 1900, on executing repairs to a water channel known as "Gunar Kuhl" in the Chilas district of the Agency.⁵⁷ Cultivators were encouraged to take more interest in the cultivation of land by giving them fixity of tenure. A declaration was issued promising occupancy rights to persons taking up the reclamation of waste and uncultivated lands, and advances were made to the cultivators on the system known as *takkavi*.⁵⁸

Another scheme which the Agency authorities carried out for improving agriculture in the Agency was to allow the cultivators of the Astore and Gilgit districts leisure to cultivate their lands. This was done by organizing, in 1893, a coolie corps 250 strong in the districts in question. For, many emergent works had to be carried on in the direction of Chilas and elsewhere for a few years after the Agency was re-established in 1889. Labour for these works was previously supplied by the villagers of these districts. These men were perpetually taken away from their fields and forced to work and carry loads in a hot climate. The result was that they lost heart, and far from improving and extending cultivation, they neglected their fields and allowed the land to its fate.⁵⁹ Creation of the coolie corps gave them the necessary relief.

(b) **Spread of Education**

For imparting education to the people of the Agency, a primary school was established at Gilgit in 1893.⁶⁰ Owing to an increase in the number of students, an increase was effected

56. JK 261/1-9 of 1912; AAR, Fgn, 1892-1893.

* The name of the channel or of the area in which it was constructed is not given in the records.

57. JK 37 of 1898.

58. Government of India, Fgn, Sec-Front, to Lord George F. Hamilton, No. 35, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, April 1896, Nos. 169-221; AAR, Fgn, 1892-1893.

59. JK 35 of 1893.

60. AAR, Fgn, 1892-1893.

in the school's establishment in 1898. The same year, to give the people of the outlying districts the opportunity of educating their sons without sending them to Gilgit, primary schools were started at Gupis, Chilas and Astore.⁶¹ With the passage of time, the number of schools in the Agency increased, so that in 1911 the Jammu and Kashmir State maintained one middle school at Gilgit and 7 primary schools one each at Astore, Hunza, Nagar, Yasin, Boonji, Hagas, and Punial at an annual cost of rupees 7500.⁶² Competent teachers were obtained from Aligarh and other educational institutions for service in these schools.⁶³ The students studying at the Middle School, Gilgit, were given free boarding and lodging facilities.⁶⁴

To improve the efficiency of these frontier schools, an Inspector of Schools was appointed whose duty it was to visit them annually and make suggestions for bettering the standard of education in them.⁶⁵

As years went by, education became so much popular with the frontier people that the sons of the Chiefs and headmen of the Agency began to come down to Srinagar to receive college education there.⁶⁶ And many posts, such as those of Munshis, Patwaris, etc. which formerly had to be paid highly by tempting candidates from Kashmir and India to serve on the Gilgit frontier, were, by 1911, filled up by natives of the district at a considerable saving to the State.⁶⁷ And the frontier youths qualified themselves even for higher jobs.⁶⁸

(c) Conservation of Forests

There were no rules in force regulating the cutting of trees in the Gilgit Agency. The contractors and the people there

61. JK 96/P-18/of 1898.

62. Minister of Education, J and K State, to Chief Minister, J and K State, June 30, 1911, JK 71/P-48 of 1911.

63. JK 85/P-18 of 1898.

64. JK 197/B-104 of 1914, P. 3; Report on the Public Works Department of the J and K State for 1914-1915.

65. Minister of Education, J and K State, to Chief Minister, J and K State, June 30, 1911, JK 71/P-48 of 1911.

66. JK 129/4-XII-2/ of 1919.

67. Minister of Education, J and K State, to Chief Minister, J and K State, June 30, 1911, JK 71/P-48 of 1911.

68. JK 129/4-XII-2/ of 1919.

had a free hand to cut as they pleased. The result was that there had been a wanton destruction of forest timber.⁶⁹ To prevent the trees in the Agency forests from indiscriminate felling and for their preservation, the Political Agent, Gilgit, in 1917, asked for the services of Lieutenant S.W. Steane, a forest officer, in conducting the survey of the Agency with special reference to the wants of the garrison in respect of fuel.⁷⁰

Accordingly, the government of India and the Kashmir Darbar deputed, in 1918, the required officer to Gilgit to achieve the object the Political Agent had in view.⁷¹ He drew up a report on the fuel resources of Gilgit, and made certain recommendations for the planting of willows and other quick-growing trees, which, he thought, would provide the entire fuel supply of Gilgit garrison by 1930, and for the systematic exploration of the forests in the Nullahs in the neighbourhood of Gilgit during the time that the willows and other trees were growing.⁷²

Steane's recommendations were carried out; from 1919 to 1926, thousands of young trees were planted. But only a few of them grew up or even took roots, there being no machinery for protecting them from the ravages of animals and people or for looking after them till they had grown reasonably strong.⁷³ The consequence was that fuel supply at Gilgit remained ever scarce, and it was a problem which no one could solve.⁷⁴

69. JK 67 of 1899.

70. JK 273/H-34 of 1918.

71. *Ibid.*

72. GOI, Fgn and Pol, Extl. No. 612-X (Sec) of 1927, Nos. 1-2.

73. *Ibid.*

74. Colonel R.C.F. Schomberg, p. 18.

Territorial Units of the Gilgit Agency, the Untold Part of their History and Lease of the Agency

The Gilgit Agency, as we have seen, comprised the under-mentioned territories:—The Gilgit Wazarat, Hunza, Nagar, Chitral, Punial, Yasin, Kuh-Ghizar, Ishkaman and Chilas. It also exercised measure of control over Darel, Tangir and Gor.¹

The Gilgit Wazarat comprised the Tehsils of Gilgit and Astore and the Niabat* of Boonji. It was under the direct control of the Kashmir Darbar, who administered it through their officer stationed at Gilgit. This officer was called Wazir-i-Wazarat. The first Wazir-i-Wazarat was apparently appointed between 1858 and 1870.² Hunza, Nagar and Chitral were ruled by their own Chiefs and were called as States. The ruler of Chitral was styled as Mehtar, whereas those of Hunza and Nagar were variously called as Thums, Mirs, Rajas etc. The districts of Yasin, Punial, Kuh-Ghizar and Ishkaman were administered by Governors who were appointed and removed by the Political Agent with the approval of the government of India and the concurrence of the Kashmir Darbar. These territories were termed as Political ilaqas or districts. Chilas

1. GOI, Fgn and Pol, File No. 64-X of 1927, Nos. 1-30.

* A unit of territory of which a Naib-Tehsildar (Naib: Deputy) was administrative incharge.

2. Assistant RK to Vice-President of Kashmir State Council, No. 3906, July 15, 1905, JK 12/A-7 of 1905; GOI, Fgn and Pol, File No. 64-X of 1927, Nos. 1-30.

was in the charge of a British Political officer called Assistant Political Agent, Chilas.³

All these areas of the Agency, barring the Gilgit Wazarat, which was Kashmir territory and was ruled by the Darbar, were under the suzerainty of Kashmir, but were not Kashmir territories and the Darbar officials were not allowed to interfere with their internal administration. The policy of the government of India towards these areas was to allow the people to govern themselves as far as possible, British officers interfering only when it was imperatively necessary that they should do so. The majority of cases criminal and civil in them were decided by the local Jirgahs*, but if the Jirgahs were unable to come to a decision the case was reported to the Chief or Governor as the case may be, whose verdict was looked upon as final. The murder cases, however, had to be referred to the Political Agent, who sent the records together with his own comments to the Resident in Kashmir, who, in turn, forwarded them on, with his advice, to the Darbar for final orders.⁴

A short history of the above territories so far as they were involved in the politics and history of Gilgit, which is our main concern in this work, has already been given. It will not be out of place to narrate here the untold part of their history and of their relationship with the Agency and the Kashmir State.

(a) **The Gilgit Wazarat**

The Wazir-i-Wazarat of Gilgit and his subordinates were not formally under the orders of the Political Agent. Generally, however, they saw fit to accept advice from him, and in practice, especially in matters of inefficiency, dilatoriness or venality of the State administration, as judged by British standards, the Political Agent did upon occasion offer advice on matters which were primarily the concern of the Wazir.⁵ The consequence of

3. JK 12/A-7 of 1905; GOI, Fgn and Pol, File No. 64-X of 1927, Nos. 1-30; Col R.C.F. Schomberg, p. 15.

* A Jirgah was an assembly or council of Elders.

4. JK 12/A-7 of 1905; GOI, Fgn and Pol, File No. 64-X of 1927, Nos. 1-30.

5. Copy of Sir Evelyn Howell's Report on his tour in the Gilgit Agency, dated November 25, 1927, GOI, Fgn and Pol, File No. 186-X (Sec) of 1935, Nos. 1-29.

this was that in practice, though not in theory, there had been a sort of dual control over the Wazarat resulting at times in friction which was prejudicial to good administration. In course of time the Kashmir Darbar grew desirous of doing away with this dyarchy, and achieved this object of theirs, in a negative way, by leasing the Agency to the British in 1935.⁶

(b) **Hunza and Nagar**

The military operations of 1891 against the States of Hunza and Nagar, which were in armed rebellion against the authority of the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir, ended, as we have seen before, in the victory of the combined forces of the Maharaja and the British. On the 15th of September, 1892, Muhammad Nazim Khan, Safdar Ali's half-brother,⁷ was installed by the Maharaja with the approval and authority of the Governor-General-in-Council as ruler of Hunza.⁸ And on the 22nd Mir Jaffer Khan was reappointed by him as ruler of Nagar with the consent and sanction of the Governor-General-in-Council.⁹

In the Sanad granted to the Mir of Hunza by the Maharaja it was laid down that, "whereas the State of Hunza had recently been in armed rebellion against my authority, and whereas in consequence thereof Raja Safdar Ali Khan has justly forfeited any rights which he may have possessed as ruler of the said State :

"And whereas the said Safdar Ali Khan has fled from Hunza, and has not returned or made submission to me or to the government of India, and whereas I nevertheless desire to continue the Chiefship of the said State of Hunza in the person of a member of the ruling family of the said State :

"Now, therefore, I have, with the approval and authority of the Governor-General of India-in-Council, selected you,

6, Prime Minister, J and K State, to RK, No. S.P.-I.C./D.O., March 20, 1933, GOI, Fgn and Pol (Sec), File No. 401-X of 1933, Nos. 1-57.

7. Viceroy to SSI, No. 259, April 15, 1892, Lansdowne Papers, Reel No. 4, NAI; RK to Amar Singh, No. 3135/DO, July 19, 1892, JK 51/A-4, of 1891; GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, October 1892, Nos. 656-674.

8. GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, October 1892, Nos. 656-674.

9. GOI, Fgn and Pol, No. 64-X of 1927, Nos. 1-30.

Muhammad Nazim Khan, to be ruler of the said State of Hunza.

“The Chiefship of the Hunza State will be hereditary in your family, and will descend in the direct line by primogeniture, provided that in each case the succession is approved by the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir for the time being and by the government of India.”

The Sanad went on to say that an annual tribute of 25 tilloos of gold, equal to 16 tolas and 5 mashas, would be paid by Muhammad Nazim Khan and his successors to the State of Jammu and Kashmir.

Muhammad Nazim Khan was informed that the permanence of the grant conveyed by this Sanad would depend upon the ready fulfilment by him and his successors of all orders given by the Jammu and Kashmir State with regard to the conduct of relations between the State of Hunza and the States and tribes adjoining it, the administration of his territory, the prevention of raiding and manstealing, the construction of roads through his country, the composition of such troops as he might be permitted to retain, and any other matters in which the Jammu and Kashmir State might intervene. He was assured that so long as his house was loyal to the State of Jammu and Kashmir and to the British government, and faithful to the conditions of this Sanad, he and his successors would enjoy favour and protection.¹⁰

Similarly a Sanad was issued to the Mir of Nagar, Jaffer Khan, which, after indicting the State of Nagar of being in armed rebellion in 1891 against the Maharaja's authority and telling him that he had justly forfeited any rights which he might have possessed as the ruler of Nagar, read :

“And whereas by reason of your submission, and in consideration of your promise to abide by the following conditions, it is thought desirable, as an act of clemency, to reappoint you as ruler of the said State :

“Now, therefore, I have resolved, with the approval and authority of the Governor-General of India-in-Council, to reappoint you, Raja Jaffer Khan, as ruler of the said State

10. JK 51/A-4 of 1891; GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, August 1892, Nos. 156-198.

of Nagar, and you are hereby appointed to be Raja of Nagar."

The Sanad continued that Jaffer Khan and his successors were to pay an annual tribute of twenty-six tilloos of gold, equal to 17 tolas and 1 masha, to the State of Jammu and Kashmir; that the permanence of the grant conveyed by it (by the Sanad) would depend upon the ready fulfilment by him and his successors of all orders given by the Jammu and Kashmir State, as detailed above in the Sanad issued to the Raja of Hunza.¹¹

In the year 1904 Raja Jaffer Khan died. He had been bed-ridden for many years and since 1892 his son, Raja Sikandar Khan, had been the virtual ruler of the State.¹² Raja Uzar Khan, the eldest son of Jaffer Khan, being the prime mover in the Hunza-Nagar rebellion of 1891, could not be restored to power in Nagar over the head of his brother Raja Sikandar Khan.¹³ The Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir, therefore, appointed, in 1905, Raja Sikandar Khan as Mir of Nagar. He was granted a Sanad on the lines similar to the ones on which it had been granted to his late father. This arrangement was effected with the permission and concurrence of the Governor-General of India-in-Council.¹⁴

And Sikandar Khan¹⁵ and Muhammad Nazim Khan ruled their respective States all through the remaining period of our study without giving any cause of complaint to the Gilgit authorities.¹⁶

Hunza and Nagar enjoyed subsidies of Rs. 4,000 each a year, half contributed by the government of India and half by

11. *Ibid*

12. B.E.M. Gurdon to RK, No. 2715, September 28, 1904, JK 47/A-22 of 1904.

13. RK to Vice-President of J and K State Council, No. 6853, November 24, 1904, JK 47/A-22 of 1904.

14. GOI, Fgn and Pol, No. 64-X of 1927, Nos. 1-30; RK to Vice-President of J and K State Council, No. 6853, November 24, 1904, JK 47/A-22, of 1904.

15. Col. R.C.F. Schomberg, p. 105.

16. *Ibid*.

the Jammu and Kashmir State, granted in 1895.¹⁷ But in the course of time, for various reasons, the cost of the system of administration increased and made matters difficult for the Mirs. In the meanwhile, activities of Soviet Russia in Central Asia became very serious and it became essential to consolidate the Gilgit Agency against her influence and intrigues on the northern frontier of British India. British friendship with the frontier Chiefs was based, *inter alia*, on the subsidies which the former gave the latter.¹⁸ The subsidies of the Mirs were, therefore, in April 1927, increased by Rs. 1,000 each.¹⁹

The annual tribute that Hunza and Nagar paid to the State of Jammu and Kashmir, was carried to Srinagar by their vakils every summer. The Darbar gave them Khillats in return.²⁰ These annual visits of the vakils of Hunza and Nagar to Kashmir for the purpose of presenting the tribute did not appear to be absolutely indispensable since the Darbar had a local representative at Gilgit in the Wazir-in-Wazarat. These visits to a distant and foreign country were distasteful to the vakils themselves and to the Chiefs of the two States. The rationing of the party to and from Kashmir was too an expense to the Darbar.

The Political Agent, therefore, on March 22, 1897, proposed the discontinuance of the annual visits and the payment of the gold into the Wazarat treasury at Gilgit.

If, however, the Darbar was not prepared to favourably consider the discontinuance of these visits altogether, the Political Agent suggested that they be made after intervals of two or three years. This, in his opinion, would, besides vindicating the dignity of the Darbar as the suzerain State and reducing its annual outlay, be a decided boon to Hunza and

17. RK to Vice-President of Kashmir State Council, No. 5530, November 14, 1894, JK 25 of 1894; Resolution III of J and K State Council passed on February 16, 1895, JK 48 of 1895.

18. PAG to the First Assistant to RK, No. 5619-S-25-C, December 5, 1925 (very Confdl), GOI, Fgn and Pol, No. 133-X (Sec), No. 1-12; From RK, No. 63-C, February 19, 1926, GOI, Fgn and Pol, No. 133-X (Sec), No. 1-12.

19. To the RK, No. 133-X, June 26, 1927, Confdl, GOI, Fgn and Pol, No. 133-X (Sec), Nos. 1-12; From RK, No. F. 5-C-26, March 9, 1928, GOI, Fgn and Pol, No. 133-X (Sec), Nos. 1-12.

20. GOI, Fgn and Pol, No. 64-X of 1927, Nos. 1-30.

Nagar.²¹ But this proposal was rejected by the Darbar on the ground that "His Highness-in-Council sees no reasons to depart from established practice and the usage of native States, under which the feudatories must present themselves before the Darbar".²²

(c) Chitral

We have mentioned before that Chitral acknowledged the suzerainty of the Maharaja of Kashmir, and through him of the British government, in 1878.²³ It continued as an integral part of the Gilgit Agency till 1896 in which year it was separated from it and amalgamated with the Political Agency established at Malakand.²⁴ But separated though it was from the Gilgit Agency, Chitral, like other territorial units of the Agency, did not cease to be a vassal State of the Maharaja of Kashmir and that of the government of India. In fact, it continued giving allegiance to the Maharaja and the British government right up to 1947. In the Anglo-Afghan war of 1919, Shuja-ul-Mulk, the Mehtar of Chitral, rendered important services to the British and earned great name. In recognition of this he was given the title of "His Highness" and a right of having a salute of 11 guns.²⁵

(d) Punial

In 1860 the district of Punial, as mentioned before, came into the possession of the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir, who gave it to Raja Isau Bahadur who was said to be the representative of its old rulers.²⁶ On Raja Isau Bahadur's death and at his request the Maharaja recognised the succession to the Chiefship of his son, Raja Muhammed Akbar Khan.*²⁷

21. Officiating PAG to RK, No. 1176, March 22, 1897, JK 1/E-S of 1891.

22. J and K State Council Resolution No. XV of April 24, 1897, JK 1/E-5 of 1891.

23. Supra, Chapter III.

24. Supra, Chapter VIII.

25. Hashmetullah Khan, p. 887.

26. Supra, Chapter I.

* The exact date of this event is not available in the records.

27. GOI, Fgn and Pol, No. 64-X of 1927, Nos. 1-30.

Raja Muhammad Akbar Khan was convicted of complicity in two cases of murder, in the Punial district in 1904, and sentenced by the Political Agent for a term of 10 years. He was deputed to Kashmir and kept as prisoner in the Hari Parbat fort there.²⁸

After the imprisonment of Raja Muhammad Akbar Khan in 1904, a brother of his, Raja Sifat Bahadur, was appointed as Governor of Punial. This was done because at this time the eldest son of Muhammad Akbar Khan, Khan Bahadur Raja Muhammad Anwar Khan, was a minor and could not be entrusted with the Governorship.²⁹

Raja Sifat Bahadur perpetrated an unsuccessful raid into the valley of Darel in November 1909, as a result of which he was suspended on his return. He, however, submitted apologies and was reinstated in 1911.³⁰ But soon after this he was appointed as Governor of Yasin and had to go thither.³¹ In 1917 Khan Bahadur Raja Muhammad Anwar Khan, who had by this time attained majority, was appointed as Governor of Punial.³² During the period between Sifat Bahadur and Khan Bahadur Raja Muhammad Anwar Khan's appointments as Governors of Yasin and Punial respectively, Punial was administered by its Wazir, Muhammad Nabi.³³ After his appointment in 1917, Muhammad Anwar Khan ruled his territory during the rest of the period of our discussion, and continued showing loyalty to his suzerains.³⁴

According to an old established custom certain men were detained in Kashmir as hostages for the good behaviour of the Punial Rajas.³⁵ But in the course of time, this practice became perfectly nugatory. It failed to prevent the occurrence of disturbances in the concerned areas. The men sent were of no importance and the whole system became out of

28. JK 227/A-32 of 1909; JK 73/A-4 of 1905.

29. Officiating RK to SGI, Fgn, No. 1323, March 14, 1910, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, August 1910, Nos. 67-77; Col R.C.F. Schomberg, p. 32.

30. PAG to RK, No. 3715/30-D, September 27, 1921, JK 227/A-32 of 1909.

31. Col R.C.F., Schomberg, p. 241.

32. GOI, Fgn and Pol, File No. 64-X of 1927, Nos. 1-30.

33. JK 227/A-32 of 1909.

34. Col R.C.F., Schomberg, p. 29.

35. British Agent, Gilgit, to RK, May 31, 1892, JK 18/A-43 of 1891.

date. It only entailed useless expenditure on the Darbar and a certain amount of hardship on the people selected as hostages and on those who paid in order to get off going to Kashmir.³⁶ Furthermore, the Raja of Punial had rendered assistance to the British Agent, Gilgit, since the re-establishment of the Agency, and especially during the Hunza-Nagar military operations of 1891.³⁷ And it was in the presence of rather a well disciplined and equipped force that quiet on the frontier and good behaviour of the people of Punial in case of disturbances eventually depended.³⁸ The system was, therefore, done away within 1892.³⁹

The Governor of Punial received a subsidy of Rs. 1,200 a year, which was fixed in 1895 and was paid by the government of India. It was increased to Rs. 1,600 with effect from the 1st of April, 1927. The amount of increase was contributed in moieties by the government of India and the Kashmir State. The reasons for effecting this increase were the same as in the case of the States of Hunza and Nagar.⁴⁰

No tribute was paid by Punial to the Kashmir Darbar.⁴¹ The Governor of Punial, however, received on behalf of the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir, an annual tribute of 4 tolas and 2 mashas of gold dust paid by the territory of Darel, which was sent to the Political Agent to be paid into the State Treasury at Gilgit. He also received from Darel a nominal tribute of salt payable to himself for his allowing the Darelis to graze their flocks in Punial limits.⁴²

36. British Agent, Gilgit, to RK, No. 227/52, March 12, 1891, JK 12/A-1 of 1891.

37. Assistant RK to the Vice-President Kashmir State Council, No. 1699, May 14, 1892, JK 12/A-1 of 1891.

38. British Agent, Gilgit, to RK, No. 227/52, March 12, 1891, JK 12/A-1 of 1891.

39. Amar Singh to Wazir-i-Wazarat, Gilgit, No. S-5, July 23, 1892, JK 18/A-43 of 1891.

40. GOI, Fgn and Pol, No. 133-X (Sec) of 1926, Nos. 1-12.

41. GOI, Fgn and Pol, No. 64-X of 1927, Nos. 1-30.

42. Officiating RK to SGI, Fgn, No. 1323, March 14, 1910, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, August 1910, Nos. 67-77; GOI, Fgn and Pol, No. 64-X of 1927, Nos. 1-30.

(e) **Yasin**

The Chitral disturbances of 1895 resulted in the severance of Yasin from that State and its formation into a Governorship of the Gilgit Agency.⁴³ On December 31, 1895, Mehtarjao Abdur Rehman Khan was appointed by the Political Agent in the name of the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir, to the Governorship of Yasin.⁴⁴ Mehtarjao Abdur Rehman Khan continued as Governor till 1911 in which year he was removed from the Governorship and deported to Kashmir because he had been intriguing in Darel and Tangir.⁴⁵

After the removal of Mehtarjao Abdur Rehman Khan, Raja Sifat Bahadur was, as has been seen, appointed as Governor of Yasin. He ruled Yasin for about 11 years. But in September 1922 he left Yasin for Darel and Tangir to carve out a position for himself in these valleys. The Political Agent deputed his Indian Assistant, Khan Sahib Maulvi Ghulam Muhammad, to administer Yasin as a temporary measure and submitted proposals to the government of India for the appointment of a permanent successor to Raja Sifat Bahadur as Governor of Yasin.⁴⁶

The Political Agent, after careful examination of the local position and long cogitation, came to the conclusion that the only suitable man for this post was Mehtarjao Abdur Rehman Khan. This conclusion was based upon the following reasons:—First, the removal of Mehtarjao Abdur Rehman Khan from the Governorship on the above charge was looked upon by the people of the Agency to be an unduly severe punishment. Secondly, he was made to suffer for 11 years

43. RK to the Foreign Secy, Calcutta, No. 17, January 4, 1896, GOI, Fgn, Front-A, April 1896, Nos. 11-24; PAG to RK, No. 96, November 3, 1904 (Confdl), GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, March 1905, Nos. 370-373.

44. PAG to RK, No. 115-C, September 11, 1900, JK 118/F-51 of 1898; GOI, Fgn, Front-A, April 1896, Nos. 11-24; PAG to RK, No. 96, November 3, 1904 (Confdl), GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, March 1905, Nos. 370-373.

45. JK 95/A-12 of 1911; RK to Foreign member of Council, J and K, August 1, 1923, JK 177-C of 1923 (Confdl); GOI, Fgn and Pol, No. 64-X of 1927, Nos. 1-30.

46. RK to Foreign member of Council, J and K, No. 177-C, August 1, 1923, JK 95/A-12 of 1911; JK 177-C of 1923.

and he had expiated for his crime by his exemplary conduct in retirement. Thirdly, he was regarded by the bulk of the population of Yasin as their one and only *de jure* Raja. Fourthly and lastly, he had a reputation for generosity.

The suggestions of the Political Agent on the subject were sanctioned by the government of India, who, on October 15, 1923, reappointed Mehtarjao Abdur Rehman Khan as Governor of Yasin conditional upon his good behaviour in the future. This arrangement was made with the approval of the Maharaja of Kashmir.⁴⁷ After his reinstatement Mehtarjao Abdur Rehman Khan conducted himself well as the ruler of Yasin.⁴⁸

In 1905 Kuh-Ghizar was incorporated with the Governorship of Yasin.⁴⁹ But when Mehtarjao Abdur Rehman Khan was deported to Kashmir in 1911, Yasin and Kuh-Ghizar, for convenience of administration, were formed into separate Governorship. These changes were effected by the government of India with the concurrence of the Kashmir Darbar.⁵⁰

The revenue of the district was taken by the Governor, but a certain amount from 1895 onwards was credited to the Kashmir Darbar as tribute.⁵¹

The Governor of the district received a subsidy of Rs. 1,200 a year from the Kashmir Darbar. It was fixed in 1895 and was increased by Rs. 400 with effect from April 1, 1927. The amount of increase was also paid by the Jammu and Kashmir State.⁵² The considerations which urged the government of India and the Kashmir State to increase this subsidy were the same as in the case of Hunza, Nagar and Punial.

47. JK 177-C of 1923.

48. Col R.C.F. Schomberg, p. 50.

49. RK to Officiating SGI, Fgn, No. 7609, December 30, 1904, Confdl, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, March 1905, Nos. 370-373; Deputy SGI to RK, No. 768-F, March 2, 1905, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, March 1905, Nos. 370-373; JK 12/A-7 of 1905.

50. GOI, Fgn and Pol, No. 64-X of 1927, Nos. 1-30.

51. Kashmir Maharaja's order dated November 2, 1907, JK 77/R.E. 6 of 1907; GOI, Fgn and Pol, No. 64-X of 1927, Nos. 1-30.

52. GOI, Fgn and Pol, No. 133-X (Sec) of 1926, Nos. 1-12; GOI, Fgn and Pol, No. 64-X of 1927, Nos. 1-30.

(f) Kuh-Ghizar

In 1895 Kuh-Ghizar too had been sundered from Chitral and formed into a Governorship under Mehrban Shah.⁵³ In 1905 Mehrban Shah was removed from the Governorship on account of old age, incompetency and maladministration, and Kuh-Ghizar was incorporated with Yasin.⁵⁴ When the Governor of Yasin, Mehtarjao Abdur Rehman Khan, was deported to Kashmir in 1911, Kuh-Ghizar, as mentioned above, was separated from Yasin and formed into a separate Governorship under Khan Bahadur Raja Murad Khan, who owed his appointment to the government of India but with the full concurrence of the Kashmir Darbar. He held the position of a paid official and had no hereditary right.⁵⁵ Here again it was the Governor who collected the revenues of the whole district, and as per his term of appointment credited a part of these revenues to the Kashmir Darbar as tribute.⁵⁶

The Governor of Kuh-Ghizar also received a subsidy of Rs. 1,200 a year, from the Kashmir Darbar. It was fixed, as in the case of other Chiefs and Governors of the different territorial units of the Agency, in 1895, and increased to Rs. 1600 with effect from the 1st of April, 1927.⁵⁷

(g) Ishkaman

In 1895 Ishkaman was also severed from Chitral and placed under the administration of a Governor. The position of the Ishkaman Governor also, as in the case of the Governor of Kuh-Ghizar, was that of a paid official without any hereditary claims to the post he held. Here again, as elsewhere, the

53. GOI, Fgn, Front-A, April 1896, Nos. 11-24; GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, March 1905, Nos. 370-373.

54. RK to Officiating SGI, Fgn, No. 7609, December 30, 1904, Confdl, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, March 1905, Nos. 370-373; PAG to RK, No. 96, November 3, 1904, Confdl, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F March 1905, Nos. 370-373.

55. GOI, Fgn and Pol, No. 64-X of 1927, Nos. 1-30; PAG to the First Assistant to RK, No. 5619-S-25-C of 1925 (very confdl), GOI, Fgn and Pol, No. 133-X (Sec) of 1926, Nos. 1-12; JK 227/A-32 of 1909.

56. GOI, Fgn and Pol, No. 64-X of 1927, Nos. 1-30.

57. GOI, Fgn and Pol, No. 133-X (Sec) of 1926, Nos. 1-12; GOI, Fgn and Pol, No. 64-X of 1927, Nos. 1-30.

Governor received the revenues of the whole district and parted with a part of them to be deposited with the Kashmir Darbar as tribute.^{58*}

The Ishkaman Governor also like those of Kuh-Ghizar and Yasin received an annual subsidy of Rs. 1,200 which was fixed on him in 1895. This subsidy was also later on increased with effect from April 1, 1927, by the same amount as in the case of Kuh-Ghizar and Yasin, and on grounds identical to those which influenced the government of India and the Kashmir Darbar in increasing the subsidies of other areas of the Agency. The increased amount was to be paid half by the government of India and half by the Jammu and Kashmir State.⁵⁹

Mir Ali Mardan Shah (ex-Mir of Wakhan) was the first Governor of Ishkaman.⁶⁰ He died in February 1926 and the government of India appointed Khan Sahib Mir Baz Khan, as his successor.⁶¹ Mir Baz Khan governed the district during the remaining period covered by our study.⁶²

(h) **Chilas**

After its occupation in 1893, Chilas was placed in the charge of a Political officer called, as mentioned before, Assistant Political Agent, Chilas. He was a British Officer and was paid by the government of India.

Chilas paid a yearly tribute of about Rs. 3,000 to Kashmir.⁶³ It was carried annually by the representatives of Chilas to Jammu for deliverance to the Maharaja. But they greatly disliked being compelled to undertake the journey which

58. RK to the Fgn Secy, Calcutta, No. 17, January 4, 1896, GOI, Fgn, Front-A, April 1896, Nos. 11-24; GOI, Fgn and Pol, No. 64-X of 1927, Nos. 1-30.

* Despite his efforts the author has not been able to find out the exact figures of the revenues these Governors collected and those of the amounts they credited to the Darbar as tribute.

59. GOI, Fgn and Pol, No. 133-X (Sec) of 1926, Nos. 1-12; GOI, Fgn, and Pol, No. 64-X of 1927, Nos. 1-30.

60. PAG to RK, No. 96, November 3, 1904, (confd!), GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, March 1905, Nos. 370-373; GOI, Fgn and Pol, No. 64-X of 1927, Nos. 1-30.

61. GOI, Fgn and Pol, No. 64-X of 1927, Nos. 1-30.

62. Col R.C.F. Schomberg, p. 23.

63. Assistant RK to Amar Singh, No. 3532, July 18, 1898, JK 6 of 1898; RK to Amar Singh, No. 2922, May 26, 1897, JK 62 of 1896 ;

entailed hardships and expense on them and compelled them to leave their homes and lands at a time when they should have been harvesting their crops. The Chilasis, therefore, in 1896, requested as a favour that they might be allowed to pay the tribute at Gilgit to the Wazir-i-Wazarat instead of their proceeding in the customary manner to Jammu to pay it there.

The arrangement to pay the tribute into the State treasury at Gilgit, and credit the amount to the Darbar in the State accounts was one that could cause no inconvenience to the officials at Gilgit, and could be a boon to the Chilasis. The scheme was, therefore, recommended by the British Agent, Gilgit,⁶⁴ and the Resident in Kashmir.⁶⁵

But the Kashmir Darbar did not consider it desirable on political grounds to dispense absolutely with the attendance of the Chilasis at Jammu for the purpose of presenting the customary tribute. But having regard to the hardships and expense of the Chilasis involved in their visits to Jammu, the Kashmir government expressed their willingness to accept the payment of the tribute every third year.⁶⁶ The practice seems to have continued as such till the end of our period of study.

(j) **Gor**

The community of Gor enjoyed special privileges as a result of their help to the British during the operations leading up to the occupation of Chilas. They also, however, as mentioned before, paid tribute to Kashmir, which was carried by their representatives to the Wazir-i-Wazarat, Gilgit.⁶⁷

(k) **Darel and Tangir**

These communities were semi-independent but acknowledged, at least in theory, the suzerainty of Kashmir. They were

64. British Agent, Gilgit, to RK, No. 1053, March 3, 1896, JK 62 of 1896; Khan Bahadur Raja Sifat Bahadur to PAG, December 26, 1921, GOI, Fgn and Pol, F, No. 203, 1922, Nos. 1-48.

65. Assistant RK to Vice-President of Kashmir State Council, No. 1277, March 27, 1896, JK 62 of 1896.

66. Vice-President Kashmir State Council to Assistant RK, No. 616, May 9, 1896, JK 62 of 1896.

67. GOI, Fgn and Pol, No. 64-X of 1927, Nos. 1-30 (For more information on Gor, please see Chapter VI).

also amenable to some control by the Gilgit Agency as a large part of their summer grazing lay within the Agency districts of Gupis and Punial and the Gilgit Wazarat, while they depended on Chilas, Gilgit and Gupis for their supplies.⁶⁸

The history of these territories had mostly been but a dreary tale of murder and blood feuds. So bad was it that there was no house without its vendetta, and life had become intolerable. People were tired of this condition of disorder and perpetual strife, and were prepared to welcome an authority capable of maintaining peace and security.⁶⁹

The government of India, however pursued a policy of non-interference with the internal affairs of these communities. The people of these valleys were left entirely alone as long as they did not commit themselves beyond their own limits.⁷⁰ This policy was based upon the fact that separate, small and independent Republics existed in Darel and Tangir, and that while this state of things continued the Republics could never be a source of danger to the British frontier districts or to their lines of communication.⁷¹

But this policy did not prove to be a politic one, for Darel and Tangir caused much trouble to the districts of the Gilgit Agency, owing to inroads made by the tribesmen. Occasional murders took place, flocks were driven off and travellers robbed. The Agency authorities retaliated by fining the tribesmen and blockading them until the money was paid.⁷²

In the light of the above facts, one might say that, in the interest of the peace of the Agency, and with a view to removing lawlessness from, and stopping blood-feuds in, Darel and

68. G.V.B. Gillan to Extra Assistant to RK, No. 21-S of 1933, March 11, 1933, GOI, Fgn and Pol (Sec), No. 385-F of 1933, Nos. 1-3; H.J. Todd to the First Assistant to RK, No. 117-T of 1928, August 16, 1928, GOI, Fgn and Pol, No. 176-X of 1928, Nos. 1-11.

69. H.J. Todd to the First Assistant to RK, No. 117-T of 1928, August 16, 1928, GOI, Fgn and Pol, No. 176-X of 1928, Nos. 1-11; Col R.C.F. Schomberg, p. 246.

70. Officiating RK to SGI, Fgn, No. 3114, June 7, 1910, GOI, Fgn, Sec-F, August 1910, Nos. 67-77.

71. *Ibid.*

72. GOI, Fgn, Front-A, September 1904, Nos. 150-245 A; JK 128/A-7 of 1902; GOI, Fgn and Pol, Extl, No. 201-X of 1934, Nos. 1-7; Col R.C.F. Schomberg, p. 247.

Tangir and British authorities ought to have occupied these tribal territories.

Lease of the Agency to the British in 1935

We have seen that a Kashmir officer appointed by the Darbar was in charge of the Gilgit Wazarat. But, Gilgit being the headquarters of the Agency, the Political Agent resided there too. The Kashmir officer, the Wazir-i-Wazarat, and his subordinates were not formally under the orders of the Political Agent. But the latter did, at times, interfere with the affairs of the Wazarat. This resulted in considerably undermining the position of the Wazir-i-Wazarat as the representative of the Kashmir government, and in developing a dual control over the Wazarat which was prejudicial to good administration. The Kashmir Darbar wanted to end this embarrassing state of affairs.⁷³

23499

They, therefore, in 1933, presented two alternative proposals to the government of India for their consideration :

- (a) Withdrawal of the British Staff from the Gilgit frontier and the transference of the responsibility for the military defence and the civil administration of the Agency to the State,
- (b) Entire removal by the State of its troops from the frontier and giving up by it the control of the civil administration leaving it to the government of India to establish both military and civil control over the political districts and that portion of the Gilgit Wazarat area which lay to the north of the Indus.

Both these alternative systems were expected to remove the disadvantages which were caused by the system of dual control.⁷⁴

The Political Agent, Gilgit, was asked by the Resident in Kashmir for his views on the alternative suggestions of the Kashmir government. He replied to the effect that it would be undesirable if not impossible, to follow a policy entailing the

73. Prime Minister Jammu and Kashmir State, to RK, No. S.P.-I. C/D.O, March 20, 1933, GOI, Fgn and Pol, Sec, File No. 401-X of 1933, Nos. 1-57.

74. *Ibid.*

submission of the Mirs of Hunza and Nagar, and of the inhabitants of the other Political districts, to the direct interference of the latter's officials.⁷⁵ He felt that the second alternative of placing the trans-Indus portion of the Gilgit Wazarat within the sphere of the Agency territories, had everything to recommend it and would remove all the disadvantages of dual control and occasional friction, and further preclude the possibility of the Darbar's officials interfering in the affairs of the Mirs and the Governors of the Political districts.

The Resident forwarded the views of the Political Agent to the government of India and fully endorsed the opinion expressed by him. After full consideration the government of India decided to accept the second alternative presented by the Kashmir State.⁷⁶

Under the circumstances, a conference was held, on the 22nd of September, 1934, at the Residency in Srinagar at which Metcalfe, Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department, the Resident in Kashmir, and Majors Gillan and Kirkbride, respectively relieved and relieving Political Agents at Gilgit, were present. Among other things, it was decided that the government of India would take over the trans-Indus portion of the Wazarat and enter into a formal agreement with the Maharaja's government.⁷⁷

This agreement was signed on March 26, 1935, by the then Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir, Hari Singh, and the Resident in Kashmir, Colonel L.E. Lang, and was subsequently ratified by the Viceroy and Governor-General of India, Lord Willingdon, on the 3rd of April. By this agreement, Maharaja Hari Singh leased for a period of sixty years from the 3rd of April, to the exclusive administration of the British government so much of the Wazarat of Gilgit province of the State of Jammu and Kashmir as lay to the right bank of the river Indus.⁷⁸

75. From RK, No. F-1-C/31, November 28, 1934, GOI, Fgn and Pol (Sec), File No. 401-X of 1933, Nos. 1-57.

76. *Ibid.*

77. *Ibid.*

78. GOI, Fgn and Pol, File No. 114-X (Sec) of 1935, No. 1-35; JK 248/B-123 of 1918, p. 369; Lt. Col Bhagwan Singh, *Political Conspiracies of Kashmir*, 1973, p. 119 (Lt-Col Bhagwan Singh has passed through thick and thin in the politics of the Kashmir State since his childhood).

The agreement had five articles as under :—

Article I—"The Viceroy and Governor-General of India may at any time after the ratification of this agreement assume the civil and military administration of so much of the Wazarat of Gilgit Province (hereinafter referred to as the 'said territory') of the State of Jammu and Kashmir as lies beyond the right bank of the river Indus, but notwithstanding anything in this agreement the said territory shall continue to be included within the dominions of His Highness the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir."⁷⁹

Article II—"In recognition of the fact that the said territory continues to be included within the dominion of His Highness the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir salutes and customary honours shall be paid in the said territory by the administration on the occasion of the birthday of His Highness, Baisakhi, Dussehra, Basant-Panchmi and on such other occasions as may be agreed upon by His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General of India. The flag of His Highness will be flown at the official headquarters of the Agency throughout the year".

Article III—"In normal circumstances no British Indian troops shall be despatched throughout that portion of the Wazarat of Gilgit Province which lies beyond the left bank of the river Indus".

Article IV—"All rights pertaining to mining are reserved to His Highness the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir....."

Article V—"This agreement shall remain in force for sixty years from the date of its ratification and the lease will terminate at the end of that period."⁸⁰

The contents of the agreement show that it only mentioned the trans-Indus portion of the Gilgit Wazarat. It is possible that the omission might be due to the fact that it was considered that the political districts were already in practice excluded from the direct administrative control of the Maharaja's government and, therefore, it was not necessary to mention them in the agreement, which was for the transfer to the

He knew Maharaja Hari Singh closely even before he served him as his last Private Secretary. See page No. 8 of the Colonel's book).

79. GOI, Fgn and Pol (Sec), Front, File No. 366-X of 1935.

80. *Ibid.*

government of India of the civil and military administration over the territory over which the State did exercise such jurisdiction.⁸¹

After the agreement for the lease was concluded, the Kashmir State ceased to have any interest in any administrative question across the Indus. It was not to make any contribution towards the cost of civil administration in the leased area with the exception of about rupees 15,000 on account of subsidies to the frontier Chiefs.⁸²

In the month of July, 1935, the Imperial Service Troops vacated the leased territory and were brought down to Kashmir.⁸³ On the 1st of August, the Wazir-i-Wazarat of Gilgit, Rao Rattan Singh, handed over the charge of the leased part of the Gilgit Wazarat to the Political Agent, Gilgit, Major Kirkbride.⁸⁴ And thus was the Gilgit Agency leased to the British.

81. Kak, R.C., p. 24.

82. Memo from RK, No. F-1-C/31, June 13, 1933, GOI, Fgn and Pol, File No. 114-X (Sec) of 1935, Nos. 1-35.

83. *Ibid.*, also *The Weekly Ranbir*, July 31, 1935, Central Library, Jammu University.

84. GOI, Fgn and Pol, File No. 114-X (Sec) of 1935, Nos. 1-35; JK 248/B-123 of 1918; *The Weekly Ranbir*, July 31, 1935, Central Library, Jammu University; *A Handbook of the Jammu and Kashmir State*, 1945, p. 16.

11

Epilogue

Thus, as we have seen, starting her expansionist movement in Central Asia at the end of the sixteenth century, and capturing Chemkund in 1864, Tashkand in 1865, Khojend in 1866, Samarkand in 1868, Khiva in 1873 and Khokand in 1876, Russia enveloped the whole of this region. By her position of vantage which Russia had acquired in Central Asia, she had become capable of menacing the security of the outer defences of India.

This menacing position of Russia in Central Asia, and the discovery of the Baroghil and Ishkaman Passes near Gilgit, and the fact that these Passes could be crossed by troops, created Russo-phobia amongst the British circles, and the need for watching the Russian movements and barring their entry into Dardistan became clamant. This the government of India sought to do in 1876 by authorising the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir to extend his control over Yasin and Chitral, and getting from him, in return, permission to station a British Officer at Gilgit as their Agent.

Major John Biddulph, who was sent to Gilgit in 1877 as British Agent, however, failed to carry out his instructions successfully and the Agency under him had to be recalled in 1881. But the mistake in withdrawing the Agency was soon realised, and it was felt that the Agency was indispensable for ensuring the security of the Indian imperium. It was therefore, re-established in 1889 under Colonel Algernon Durand.

The re-establishment of the Agency was altogether abnoxious to the freedom-loving people of the frontier, who did not like any interference in their affairs from any quarter whatever. It was, however, a part of the British policy to

establish peace and serenity in the area, and to make its people subservient and law-abiding. Such a situation resulted in the outbreak of the Hunza-Nagar war in 1891-92 and the Indus Valley risings in 1892-93. But the British obtained victory on both these occasions.

The risings in the Indus valley were followed by the Chitral disturbances. After the relief of Chitral in April 1895, the question of retention of the British troops in the State became a party cry in England. The Liberals were in favour of withdrawal from Chitral, while the Conservatives wanted to continue with its occupation. The capture of power by the Conservatives in the summer of 1895, however, decided the issue and Chitral was retained. But this State was separated from the political charge of Gilgit in 1896 when it was placed under the Political Agency established at Malakand.

After the occupation of Hunza and Nagar in 1892 and Chilas in 1893, there occurred no disturbances in the Gilgit Agency. The different areas of the Agency were ruled by their own Chiefs, and in accordance with their own customs and traditions, the British officers interfering only when it was indispensable to do so.

Some contemporary authorities have opined that the presence of the British on the Gilgit frontier was unjustified in that they interfered with the independence of the tribes and butchered them without the 'slightest provocation' in their endeavours to retain their freedom.*

It cannot be denied that the presence of the British at Gilgit caused interference in the independence of the people of this frontier. It is equally true that the British, on occasion, resorted to force to humble the wild and recalcitrant people of this region. But it is difficult to uphold the allegation that the British despatched the tribal people without the slightest provocation. For, both in the Hunza-Nagar War and the Indus Valley risings the provocation had come from the side of the tribesmen, and the British had only acted in self-defence.

On the other hand, the presence of the British on the frontier was a decided boon to the people of the area inasmuch as they happened to carry out a civilizing mission in the Agency.

* See Chapter VI above.

These tribal people counted life as nothing, and would commit cold-blooded murders almost with impunity. In fact, in some areas, like Darel and Tangir, of the Agency there was no house without its vendetta. Life on the frontier had become intolerable, and the people pined for peace and tranquillity.¹ This need of theirs was amply supplied by the British, who introduced the system of inflicting punishments for the commission of crimes, which naturally lowered their incidence. The British also ameliorated the financial position of these people. This they did by improving agriculture, creating different avenues of employment, spreading education and giving subsidies and Khillats to the Chiefs of the Agency's different territorial units. The popularity of the British Indian rule on the frontier is revealed by the fact that although, in 1947, the British were leaving Delhi for ever, the Thums of Hunza and Nagar and the Mehtar of Chitral opted for joining the rulers of that capital rather than for Pakistan, although the latter country is inhabited by their co-religionists, the Muslims.²

The political justification for the British Agency at Gilgit is proved by its re-establishment in 1889 after it had been withdrawn in 1881. The British had, in fact, realised that the Agency was indispensable for guarding the northern boundaries of the Indian imperium. Gilgit was a strategically important point situated at one extremity of India, on its north. This point had to be made use of for the defences of the country, no matter who ruled it, the British or the Indian themselves. The fact that the Russians in 1895 had orders to march into Chitral if the British marched out proves that the Gilgit Agency scheme was not a futile exercise that the British underwent on the Gilgit frontier.

1. See Col R.C.F. Schomberg, *Between the Oxus and the Indus*, 1935..

2. Kak, B.L., *The Fall of Gilgit*, 1977, p. 14.

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VI. Personal Interviews

1. Subedar Ganga Singh Jamwal, (retired), 4th J and K Infantry.
2. Subedar Ram Saran Dass, (retired).
3. Sepoy Amar Singh Jamwal (retired), Raghu Pertap Regiment of the Imperial Service Troops maintained by the Jammu and Kashmir State.

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